SAMURAI EXECUTIONER

首斬り朝

VOLUME 7 **THE BAMBOO SPLITTER**

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

首斬り朝

SAMURAI EXECUTIONER

首斬り朝

Punished is not the man himself,
but the evil that resides in him.

story
KAZUO KOIKE

art
GOSEKI KOJIMA

DARK HORSE MANGA™

translation
MARC MIYAKE

lettering & retouch
SNO CONE STUDIOS

publisher
MIKE RICHARDSON

editor
TIM ERVIN

book design
DARIN FABRICK

art director
LIA RIBACCHI

Published by Dark Horse Manga, a division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc.,
in association with Soeisha Inc.

Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222
www.darkhorse.com

First edition: December 2005
ISBN: 978-1-59307-276-6

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in Canada

Samurai Executioner Vol. 7: The Bamboo Splitter

Samurai Executioner™ & © 1995, 2005 Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima. Translation and adaptation, and all other material unless otherwise specified, ™ & © 2005 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. English translation rights arranged with SOEISHA, INC., TOKYO. Originally published in Japan in 1995 by KOIKE SHOIN PUBLISHING CO., LTD., TOKYO. No portion of this publication may be reproduced, in any form or by any means, without the express written permission of the copyright holders. Names, characters, places, and incidents featured in this publication are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, institutions, or locales, without satiric intent, is coincidental. Dark Horse Manga™ is a trademark of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. Dark Horse Comics® is a trademark of Dark Horse Comics, Inc., registered in various categories and countries. All rights reserved.

To find a comics shop in your area, call the
Comic Shop Locator Service toll-free at 1-888-266-4226.

首斬り朝

THE BAMBOO SPLITTER

by KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME
7

A NOTE TO READERS

Samurai Executioner is a carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

SAMURAI EXECUTIONER 首斬り朝

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Heading to a Festival 9

The Last Performance 41

Karmic Fire 57

The Bamboo Splitter 119

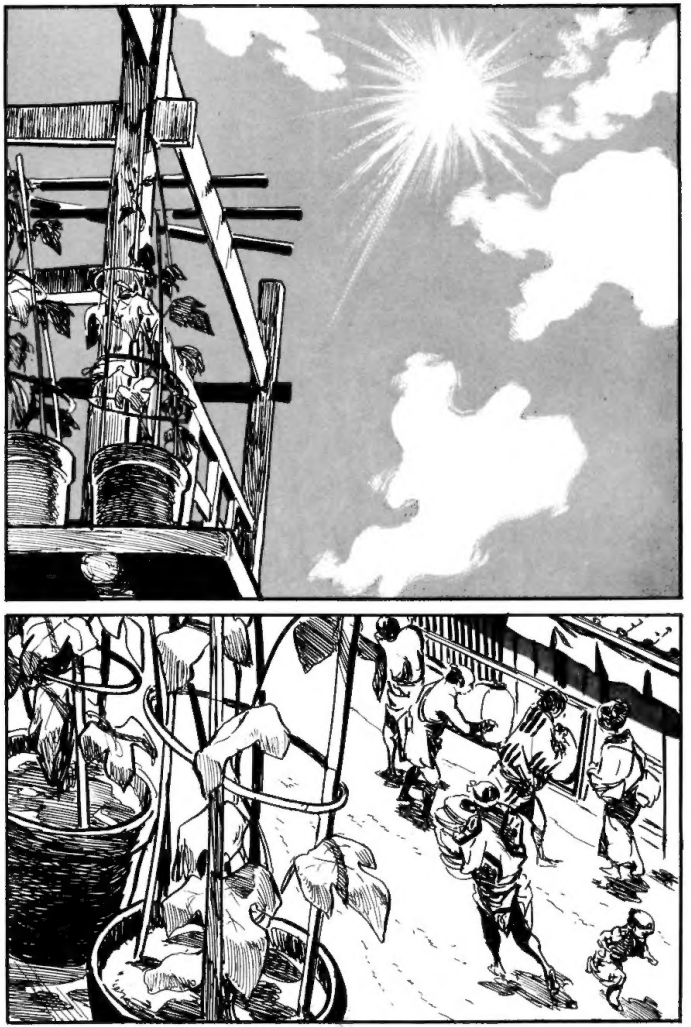
Toothless Yoshichi 225

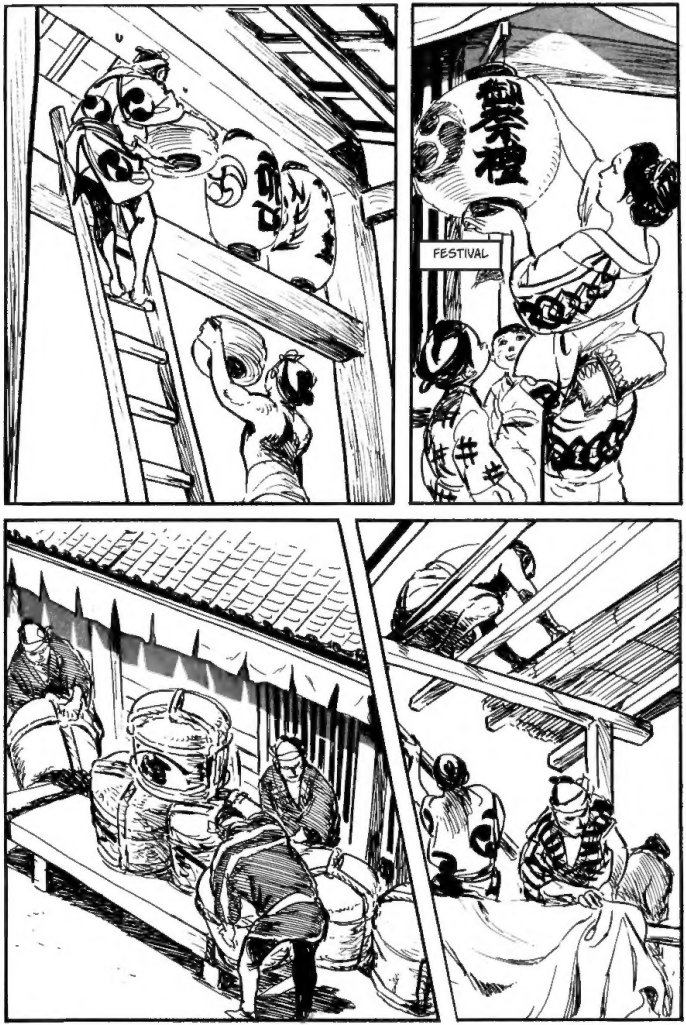
Glossary 302

Creator Profiles 303

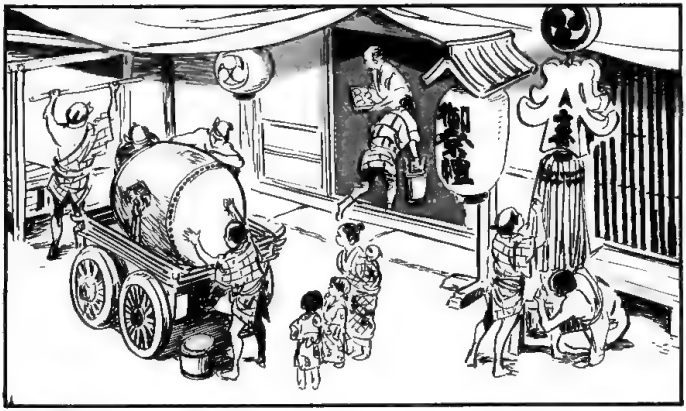
the twenty-ninth

Heading to a Festival




FESTIVAL

THUNKA THUNK THUNK
BEEP BEEP
PEEP EEE EEP BEEP
BEEP
THUNK
THUNKA THUNK



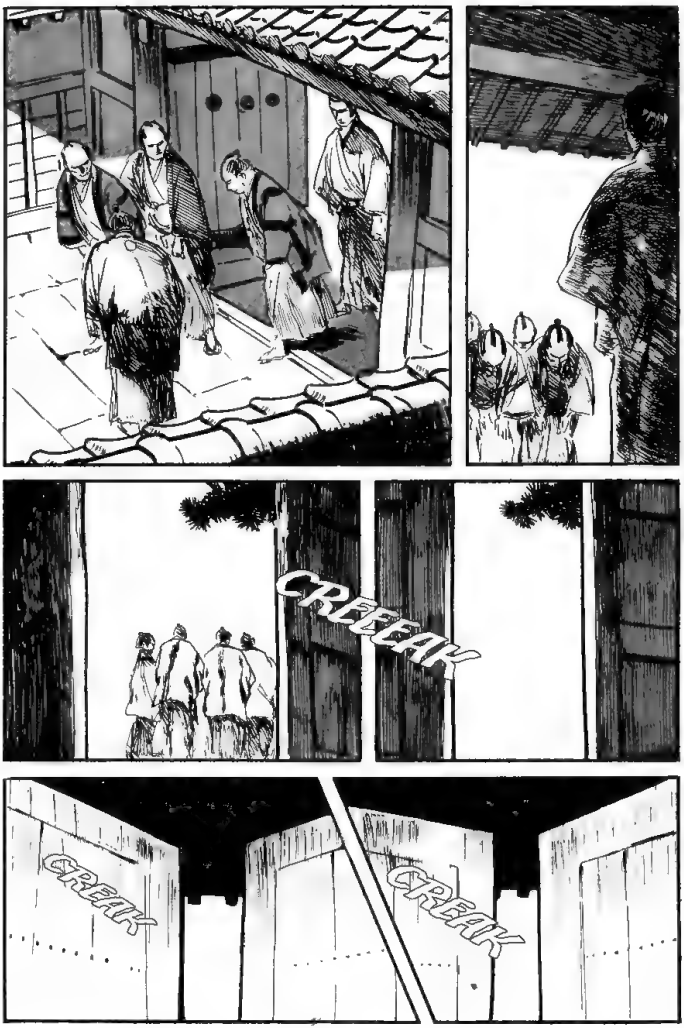
THANKS!
SAME TO YOU!
IT'S *HOT*.

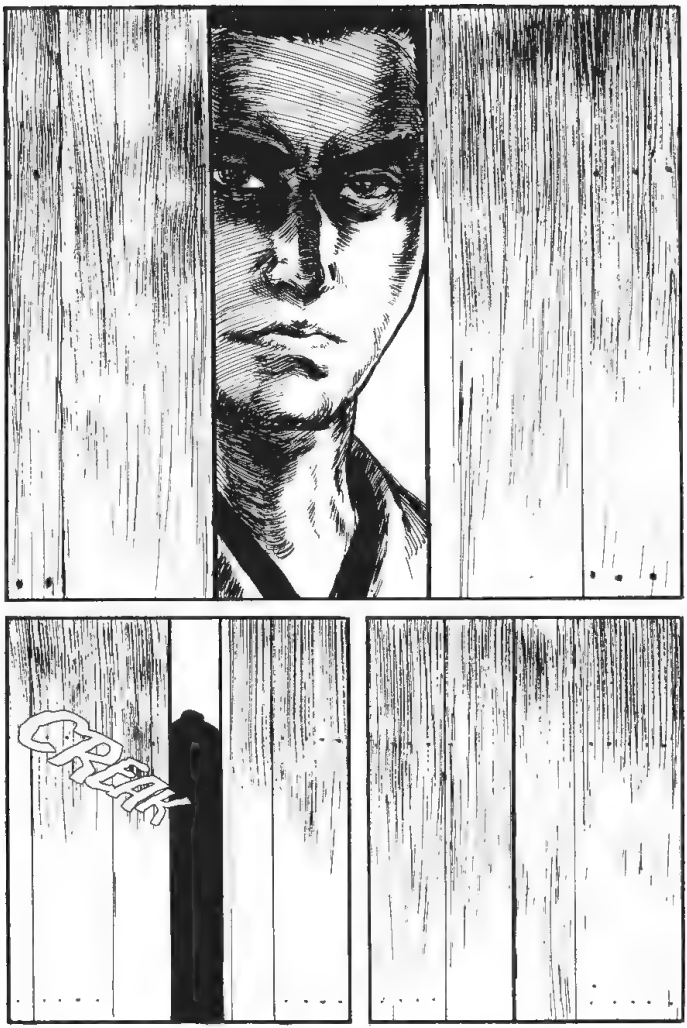
BUT THIS WEATHER'LL BE *JUST RIGHT* FOR THE FESTIVAL STARTING *TOMORROW*!

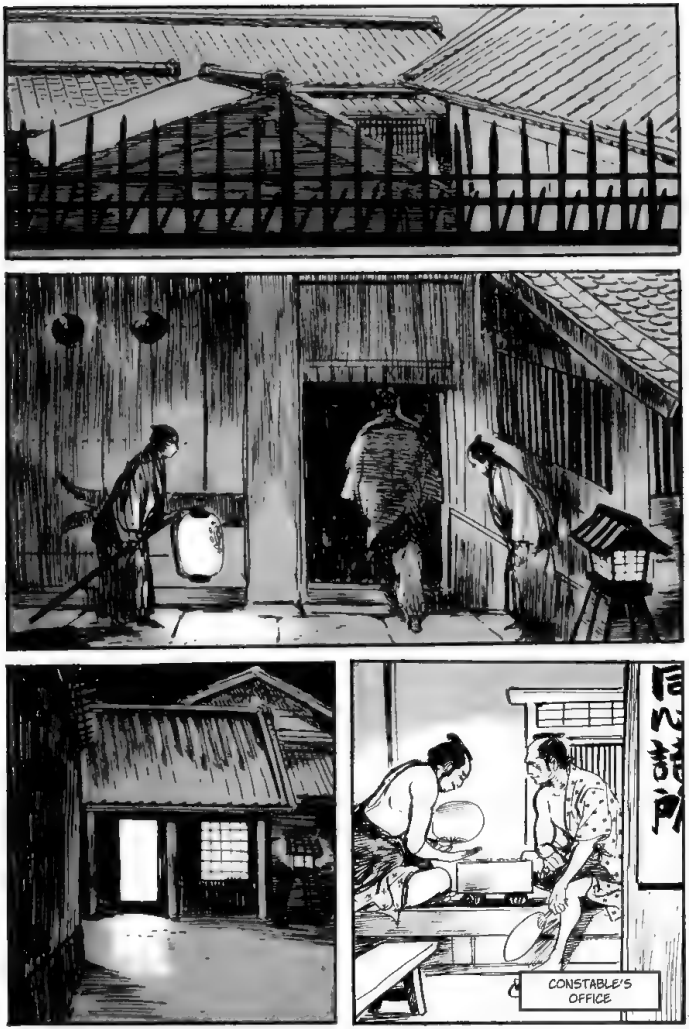
SO THEN IT'S GONNA BE A *GREAT* FESTIVAL.
WHERE ARE THE ORGANIZERS GOING?!
TO YAMADA-*SAN'S* HOUSE.
OH!
WE CAN'T HAVE HIM LURKING AROUND DURING THE FESTIVAL. HE'D GIVE US *BAD LUCK*.
AND *THAT'S* WHY THE ORGANIZERS GO TO HIS PLACE IN ADVANCE TO ASK HIM NOT TO COME OUT DURING THE FESTIVAL.

BUT...
YOU THINK ABOUT IT, WE SHOULD FEEL SORRY FOR EXECUTIONER ASA. HE'S NEVER PARTICIPATED IN A FESTIVAL. HE'S NEVER EVEN SEEN A MIKOSHI.
NOT EVEN NOW! IT MUST'VE BEEN EVEN HARDER ON HIM AS A KID, NOT BEING ABLE TO GO OUTSIDE...
HE COULD ONLY HEAR THE FLUTES AND DRUMS FROM AFAR.
IT'S HIS KARMA!
EVEN SO, WE DON'T WANT THE GOD OF DEATH LOOKING DOWN ON US DURING A FESTIVAL, DO WE?

諸行無常
是生滅法
生滅滅已
寂滅為樂
ALL THINGS ARE IMPERMANENT
THIS IS THE LAW OF LIFE AND EXTINCTION
WHEN BOTH LIFE AND EXTINCTION PERISH
NIRVANA WILL BE BLISS.


CREEAK
CREAK
CREAK


CREAK

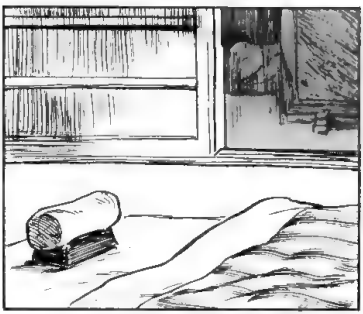

CONSTABLE'S
OFFICE

Y-YOU'RE YAMADA-SAMA...
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE SO LATE?!
STARTING TOMORROW, I'LL BE IMPOSING ON YOU BY BEING CONFINED HERE FOR THREE DAYS.
OH, I SEE...
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME! YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING.

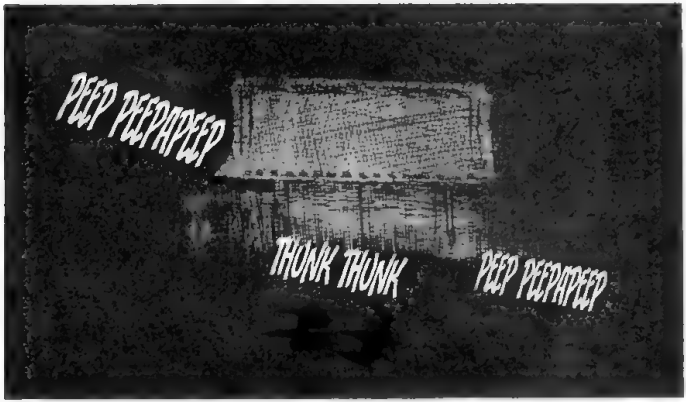
WHY?
IT'S BECAUSE FESTIVALS ARE FUN FOR THE TOWNSPEOPLE, ISN'T IT?
THANK YOU!
UM, NO, IT'S, UH, NO PROBLEM...

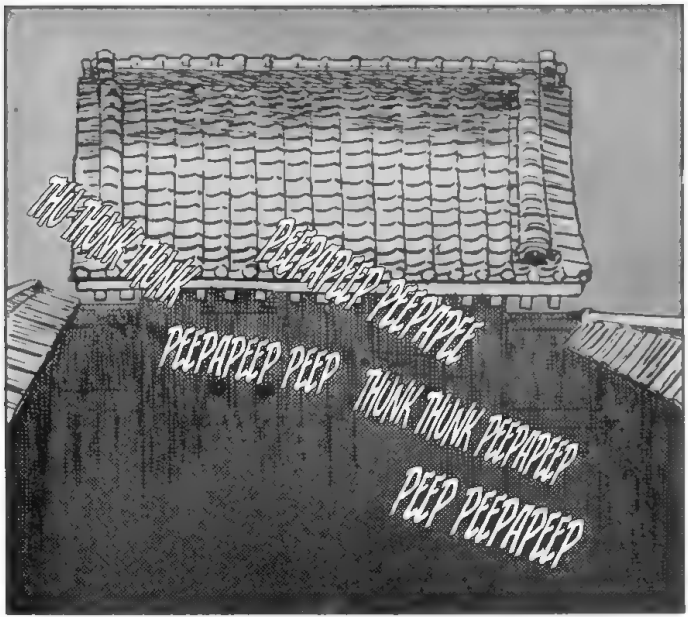
IS THAT YAMADA-SAMA?
YES! HE'LL BE CONFINED HERE BECAUSE OF THE FESTIVAL.
AH, SO THAT'S WHY...
IT'S STEAMING TONIGHT...
WHAT'S WRONG?!
NOTHING. IT'S NO BIG DEAL.
TOMORROW RUNAWAY KICHIBEE'S GONNA END UP LIKE THIS.
AND SO...?
WELL, HE WANTS TO SEE TOMORROW'S FESTIVAL.
THAT'S HIS LAST WISH HE WAS CRYING.
HMPH! IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

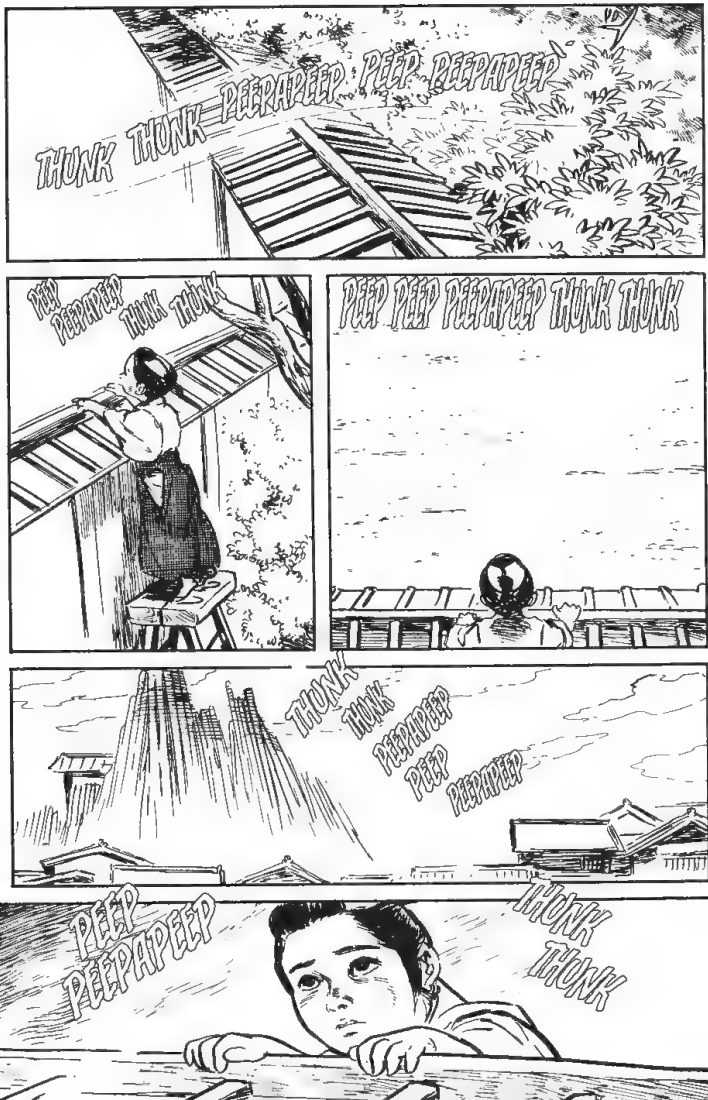
IT'S BEEN TWENTY-FOUR YEARS SINCE HE WAS EXILED TO THE ISLAND. HE WAS PLEADING TO SEE HIS HOMETOWN'S MYŌJIN FESTIVAL ONE LAST TIME BEFORE HE DIED.
THAT WAS THE ONLY REASON HE FLED FROM THE ISLAND.
SO IS THAT ALL?!
IS A FESTIVAL SOMETHING SO NOSTALGIC THAT IT'S WORTH DYING FOR?



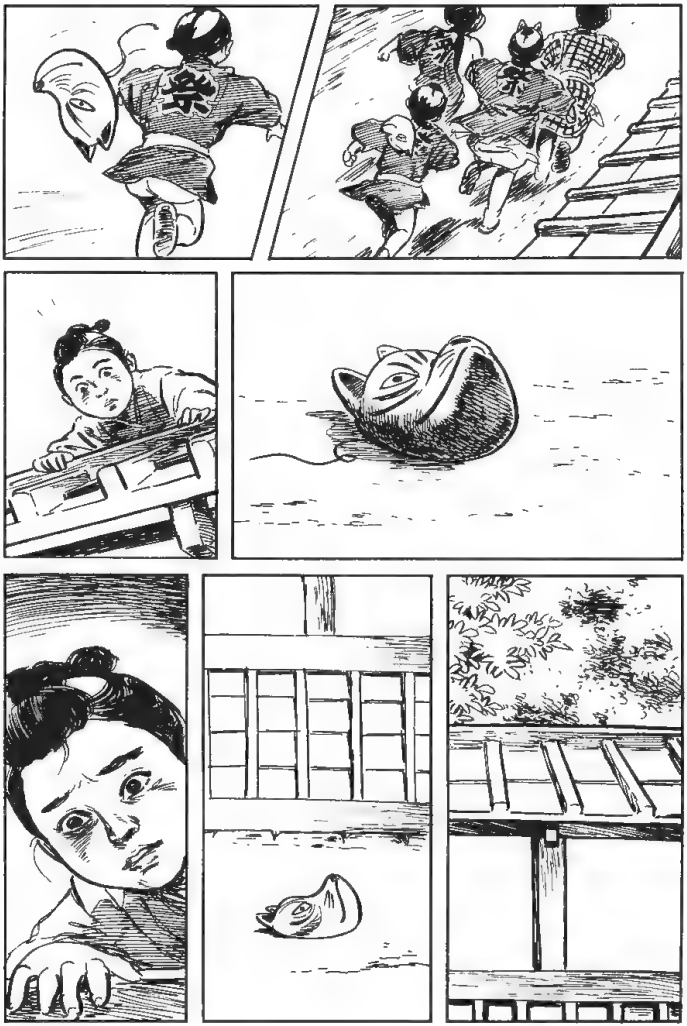
PEEPEAAPEEP
THUNKTHUNK PEEP
PEEP PEAPAPEEP
PEAPAPEEP
THUNK THUNK
PEEP PEAPAPEEP

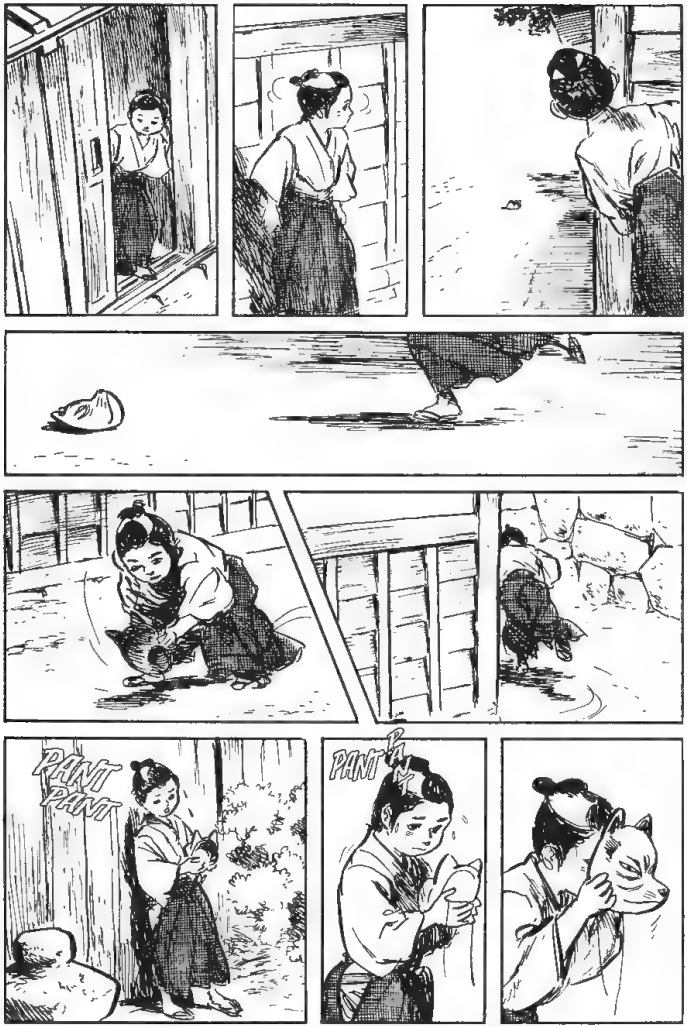

PEEP PEEPAPEEP
THUNK THUNK
PEEP PEEPAPEEP


THU-THUNK-THUNK
PEEPAPEEP PEEPAPEE
PEEPAPEEP PEEP
THUNK THUNK PEEPAPEEP
PEEP PEEPAPEEP

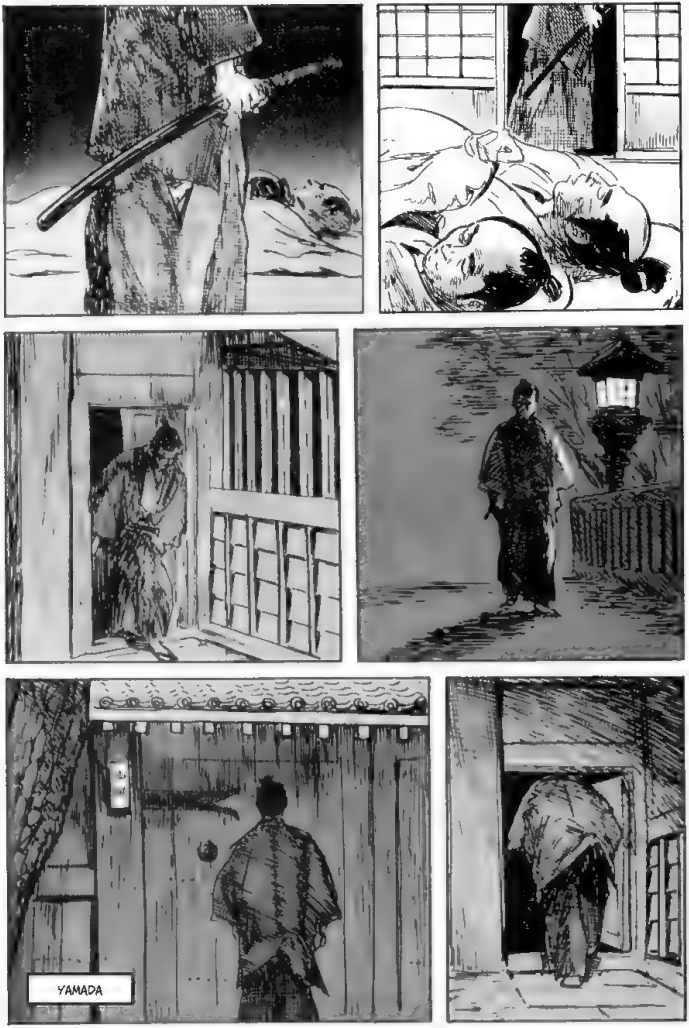

THUNK THUNK PEEPAPEEP PEEP PEEPAPEEP
PEEP PEEPAPEEP THUNK THUNK
PEEP PEEP PEEPAPEEP THUNK THUNK
THUNK THUNK PEEPAPEEP PEEP PEEPAPEEP
PEEP PEEPAPEEP
THUNK THUNK

SUMMER FESTIVALS WERE FULL OF LONGING... AND SADNESS.
AIAIAH! HEYYY!
AIAIAH!
HEYYY!
HEYYY!



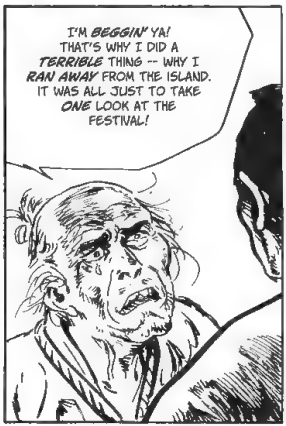

PANT
PANT
PANT

PEEEPAIPEEP PEEEPAIPEEP
THUNK THUNK
WHEN HE PUT ON THE MASK, HE WAS SOMEHOW ABLE TO *HEAR* THE FESTIVAL MUSICIANS PLAYING NEARBY.
PEEEEPAIPEEP THUNKITHUNK THUNK
PEEPAIPEEP THUNK THUNK
AND THE MASK WAS FILLED WITH THE *SMELL* OF THE FESTIVAL.


YAMADA

I-I'M *BEGGIN'* YA!

I WANNA SEE THE MYŌJIN FESTIVAL... EVEN JUST A *GLANCE* ... PLEASE...


I'M *BEGGIN'* YA! THAT'S WHY I DID A *TERRIBLE* THING -- WHY I *RAN AWAY* FROM THE ISLAND. IT WAS ALL JUST TO TAKE *ONE* LOOK AT THE FESTIVAL!

I'M *BEGGIN'* YA!

YAMADA-*SAMA* SAID NOT TO COVER HIS FACE WITH PAPER.
?!

I BEG YA!
AT THIS RATE, I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE DROPPED DEAD BACK ON THE ISLAND!
I BEG YA! JUST ONE LOOK AT THE FESTIVAL'LL BE ENOUGH!
I BEG YA! I AIN'T MAD 'CUS I WANNA LIVE!
I WAS LIVIN' THINKIN' I'D DIE TOMORROW ANYWAY! I DON'T GOT LONG TO LIVE!

LEMME SEE THE FESTIVAL! JUST ONE LOOK!
LEMME...
...SEE IT!

OH!
THE FESTIVAL
MUSIC...

I CAN
HEAR IT...
THE MUSIC...
SUMMER FESTIVALS
WERE FULL OF
LONGING...
AND *SADNESS*.

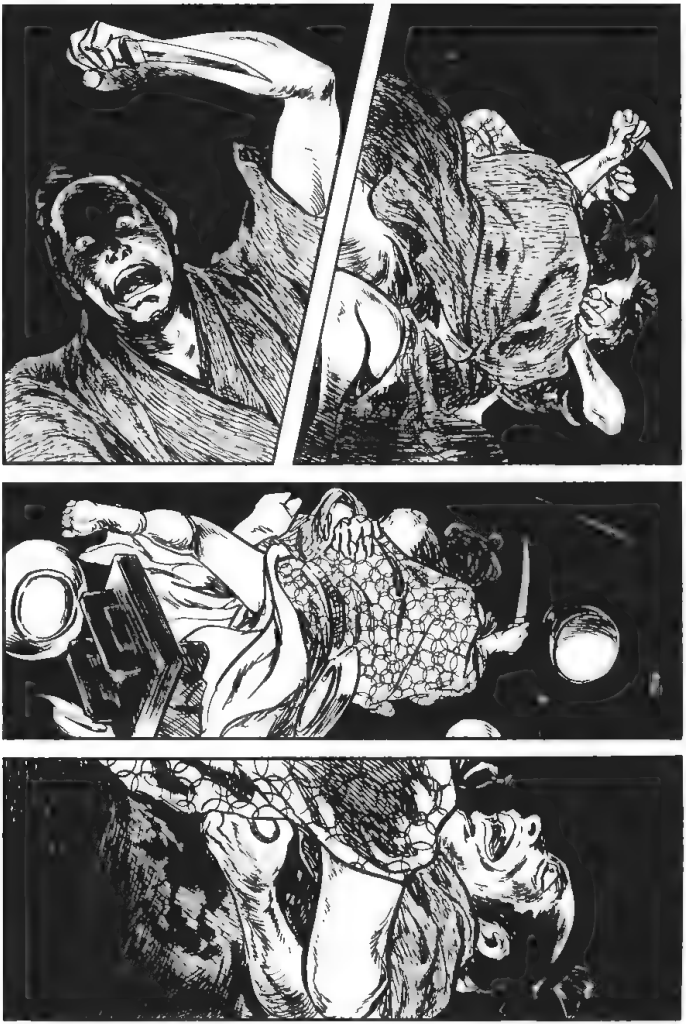
the thirtieth

The Last Perfor-mance

OHHH
OH
OHH
OHHH
OHHH

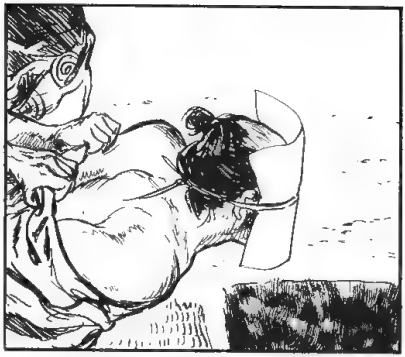
OHHH
OH
OHH
OHHH

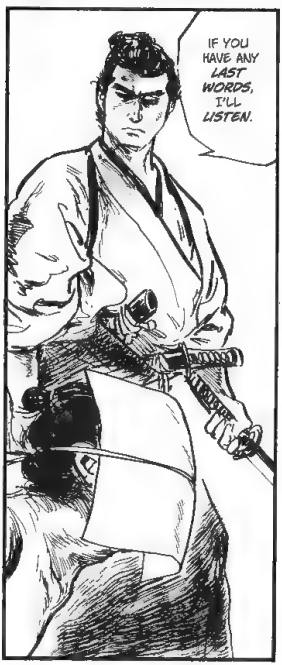
AHHH!

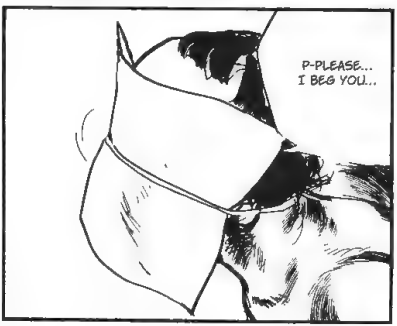


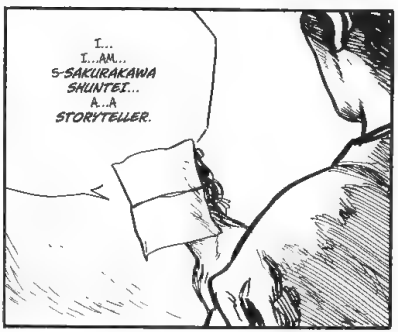
SAKURAKAWA SHINTEI OF THE DOTEGURA STAGE IN EDOBASHI, A.K.A. SHINSUKE OF KIYOUEMON IN KOBIKI-CHŌ...
...HAD AN AFFAIR WITH MICHI, THE WIFE OF ROKUEMON OF THE ASUKE-YA SOCK STORE. WHEN SHINSUKE AND MICHI WERE SLEEPING TOGETHER, ROKUEMON BURST IN ON THEM. ROKUEMON KILLED HIS WIFE. THEN SHINSUKE KILLED HIM.

THERE WAS NO DOUBT. SHINSUKE WOULD HAVE TO FACE THE DEATH PENALTY.

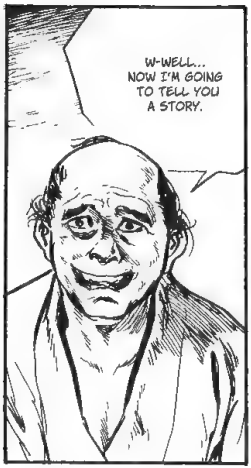



IF YOU HAVE ANY LAST WORDS, I'LL LISTEN.


P-PLEASE... I BEG YOU...


I... I...AM... S-SAKURAKAWA SHUNTEI... A...A STORYTELLER.

I...I'M NOT BEGGING FOR MY LIFE... I JUST DON'T WANT TO HAVE A DISHONORABLE DEATH.
S-SO...COULD YOU LET ME GIVE ONE LAST PERFORMANCE HERE... WHEN A STORYTELLER SPEAKS...HE IS ABSORBED INTO HIS ART... AND HE FORGETS WHO HE IS.
I... BEG...YOU... LET ME PERFORM... JUST SO I CAN CALM DOWN....
I-IF I CAN GIVE A PERFORMANCE... SUBMERGE MYSELF IN MY ART...T-THEN I CAN DIE WITHOUT ANY REGRETS.
FINE.
TH-THANK YOU...


W-WELL... NOW I'M GOING TO TELL YOU A STORY.

ALL THINGS HAVE A *FRONT* AND A *BACK*...A *YIN* AND A *YANG*... AND NOTHING ILLUSTRATES THIS BETTER THAN OUR *HANDS!*

IF OUR *PALMS* ARE *YANG*, THEN THEIR *BACKS* ARE *YIN!*

NO GHOST GOES AROUND WITH HIS HANDS LIKE THIS!
A...A REFEREE'S...
...UHHH...
HEH HEH..
II GET IT. NO GHOST GOES AROUND SHOWING HIS PALMS HEH HEH..

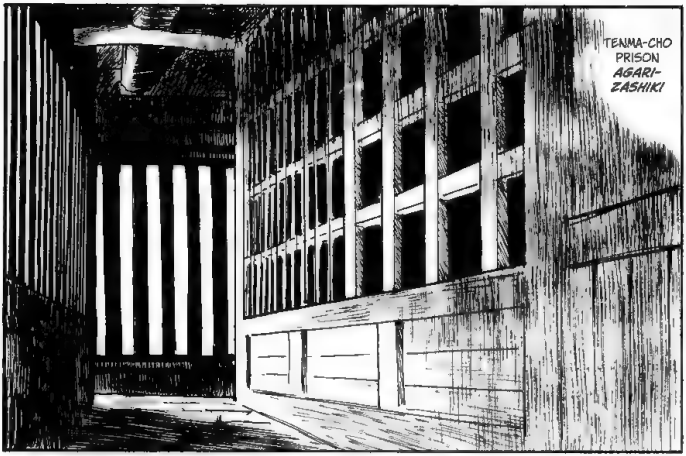
A REFEREE'S HANDS ARE *YIN*, RIGHT?
WELL, WELL, WELL...
IF HIS HANDS ARE *YANG*, THEN SOMETHING *TERRIBLE* WILL HAPPEN!
LOOK! SEE? SEE?
LOOK AT THAT! NOW THEY'RE GONNA FIGHT SOME *MORE!*
HEH HEH HEH HEH HEH...

HA HA HA HA HA!
PEOPLE ARE CARRYING A MIKOSHI DURING A FESTIVAL. THEIR HANDS BECOME YANG!
WASSHO! WASSHO! WASSHO!
HA HA HA!
HA HA HA HA!
AND IF THEIR HANDS BECAME YIN, THEN THEY'D LOOK LIKE THIS!
WASSHO! WASSHO! WASSHO!

IT'S NOT THAT THERE'S A FESTIVAL GOING ON OR ANYTHING...
HA HA HA!
HA
HA HA!
BZHHHH!

the Thirty-first

Kazmic Fire


TENMA-CHO
PRISON
AGARI-
ZASHIKI

HEE HEE HEE HEE
THE GUARDS ON DUTY
IT'S GETTIN' REAL COLD NOW.

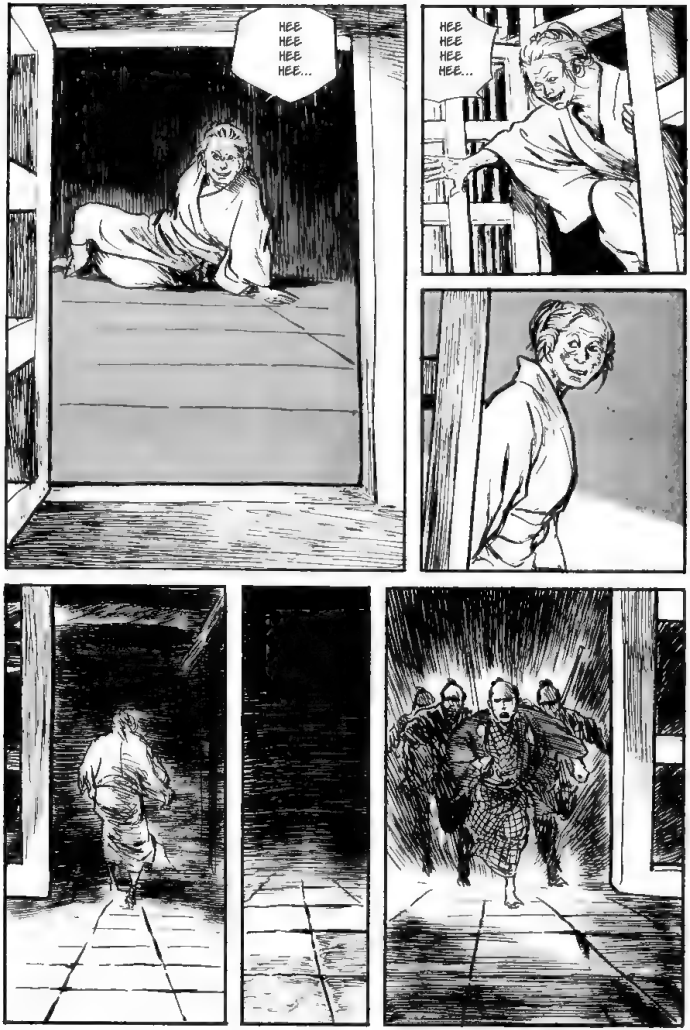
I COULD SURE USE A CUP OF HOT SAKE.
NEVER MIND THAT. WE'LL SOON HAVE TO *FEED* HER.

IT'S TIME TO EAT, MA'AM.

GULP
M--
MA'AM...?
SHE
D-DOESN'T
HEAR ME, EVEN
THOUGH IT'S
TIME TO EAT.
LADY,
ANSWER
ME!
M-MA'AM...?

KICH TCH
KTCH
M-MA'AM...?
FLOP

GASP!
AAA!!
OOF!


HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE...
HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE...

SH-SHE'S DEAD...
BRRR...
I-IT CAN'T BE...
YOU IDIOT!
SHE CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR FIND HER!

DID YOU SEE HER?
W-WELL... NOT AT ALL...
SHE CAN'T HAVE LEFT THE PRISON.
SHE MUST BE SOMEWHERE ON THE PREMISES...
DID YOU LOOK IN THE BLOOD-HOLE?
NO.. SHE COULDN'T BE...
BUT THAT'S JUST THE SORT OF PLACE SHE MIGHT HIDE...

AGH!

HEE HEE HEE HEE...
YOU OLD CRONE!
HEE HEE... NO ONE BEFORE OR AFTER ME WILL HAVE EVER ENTERED THE BLOODHOLE ALIVE!
HEE HEE... TOMORROW AT THE HOUR OF THE HORSE I'LL BE SITTING THERE... BUT WILL MY HEAD ROLL IN HERE?
HEE HEE HEE HEE!
LIKE HELL IT WILL!
HE MAY BE "HEADCHOPPER ASA," BUT HE WON'T HAVE AN EASY TIME CHOPPING MY HEAD OFF--NOT WHEN HE FACES MY MAGIC!

MUNCH MUNCH
SHE'S EATING *WELL* FOR SOMEBODY WHO'S GONNA *DIE* TOMORROW.
MMM...
THAT WAS *GOOD*....
MY STOMACK'S *FULL*, BUT I'M STILL *HUNGRY* FOR *SOMETHING ELSE*.
WHOOSH

C'MON, GUYS!
DON'TCHA WANT ME?
UGHHH
BLECH!
I FEEL SICK!

WHAT HAPPENED?
IT'S... THAT OLD LADY AGAIN!
I-IT'S YAMADA-SAMA.
WHAT IS IT, YAMADA-SAMA?
IS THE OLD WOMAN I'M EXECUTING TOMORROW IN THE AGARIZASHIKI?
SHE'S THE MOTHER OF THE HEAD PRIEST OF A SHRINE, SO THE TEMPLE AND SHRINE COMMISSION HAD US PUT HER IN THERE, AND IT'S BEEN AWFUL EVER SINCE...
I WOULD LIKE TO STAY WITH HER FOR THE NIGHT.
WHAT?!

YUCK! IT *STINKS* IN HERE!
THE OLD LADY'S TAKEN A SHIT AGAIN!
SHE DID IT H-*HERE*?!
ALL RIGHT, THAT'S *ENOUGH*! YOU'RE GONNA BE *EXECUTED* TOMORROW!
WHY DON'TCHA *REPENT* YOUR CRIMES AND *PRAY* YOU CAN GO TO *PARADISE*?!

HEE HEE... I'M ALREADY IN HELL.
HEE HEE...
SHE'S TOTALLY HOPELESS.
A-ARE YOU SURE?
UH-HUH.
KICH

WHO ARE YOU?!
I AM YAMADA ASAEMON.
PTUI!
YOU OLD BITCH!

IT'S ALL RIGHT. STAY BACK.
H-HEY, B-BUT--
I SAID IT'S ALL RIGHT!
EVEN IF WE CLOSE THE DOOR?
I DON'T CARE.
CALL US IF YOU NEED ANYTHING.
HEE HEE HEE HEE...
WHAT'D YOU COME HERE FOR? JUST TO SEE ME? HEE HEE...

IT AIN'T GONNA DO YOU ANY GOOD! I'M NOT GONNA GET *MY* HEAD LOPPED OFF BY THE LIKES OF *YOU!*
I'VE GOT *MAGIC*, Y'SEE...
HEE HEE...IF YOU TRY TO CUT MY HEAD OFF, YOUR BLADE'S GONNA *BEND* OR *BREAK!* HEE HEE...
HA, HA. SO, HAVE YOU COME TO SEE HOW *POWERFUL* MY MAGIC IS?
HEE HEE... YOU *HAVE*, HUH? SO I'LL *SHOW* YOU WHAT YOU WANNA SEE.
DON'T BE SURPRISED.
CLAP

ON BABABABA KYUITA SABA DARUMA SABASABA KITSUDO KAN!!
ON TATAGATO
NAUBABAYA SOWAKA!

ON HADAMAKU NAUBABAYA SOWAKA!
ON BASARA KIRIKIRI BASARA BURITSU MANDA MANDA MANDA...
UN! HATTA!!
SLEEP!
LIE DOWN!

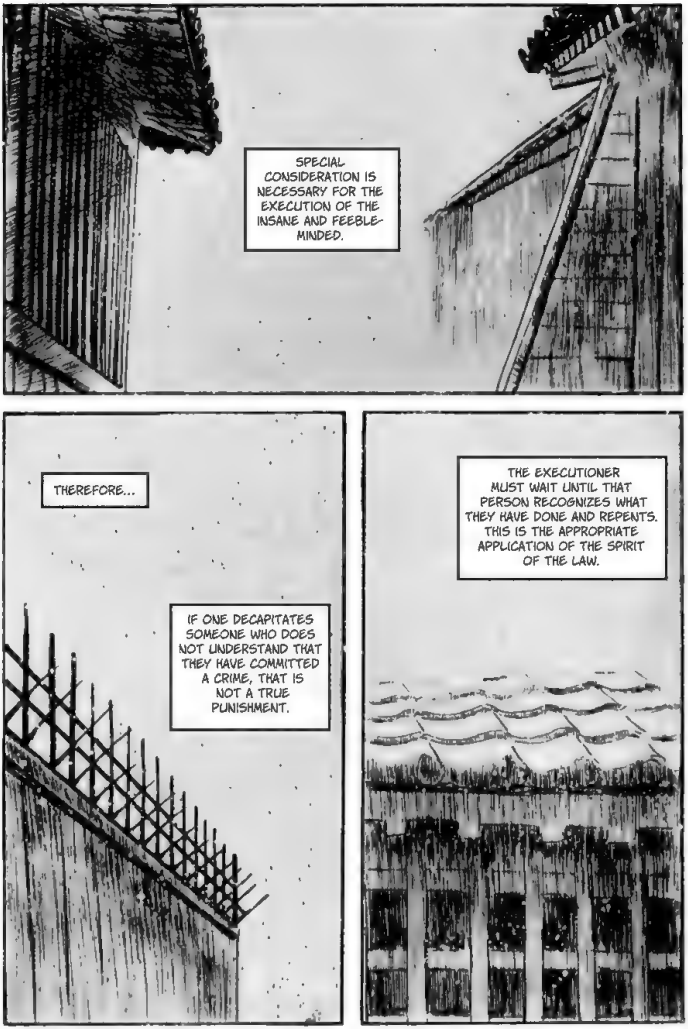
HEE HEE HEE HEE!
HEE HEE HEE HEE!
GET UP!
YOU'RE MY SERVANT!
YOU *MUST* OBEY ANYTHING I SAY!

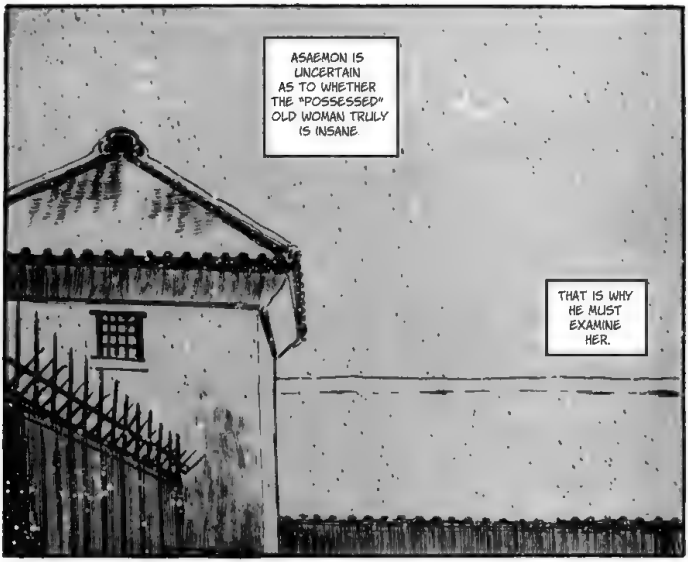
RUB MY SHOULDERS!
HEE HEE...
MY HIPS TOO! HEE HEE...

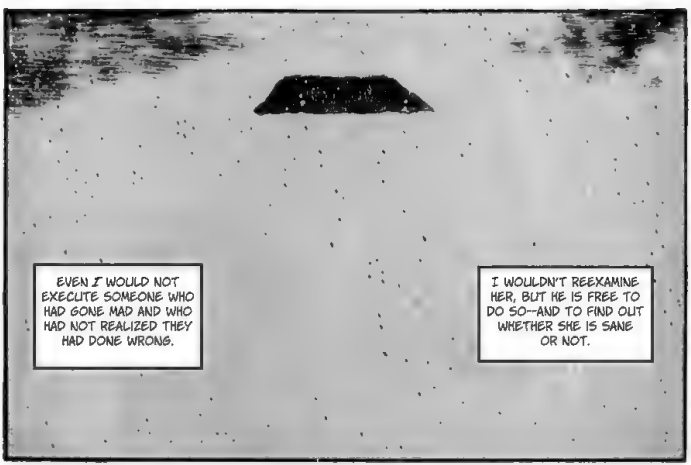
W-WHAT'S GOING ON?
THAT OLD BITCH! SHE EVEN TRIED TO WORK HER "MAGIC" ON ME, SAYING A BUNCH OF MEANINGLESS THINGS, AND IT *NEVER* WORKED, BUT NOW...?!
YAMADA-*SAMA* MUST BE *PRETENDING* IT WORKS.
HUH ...?!

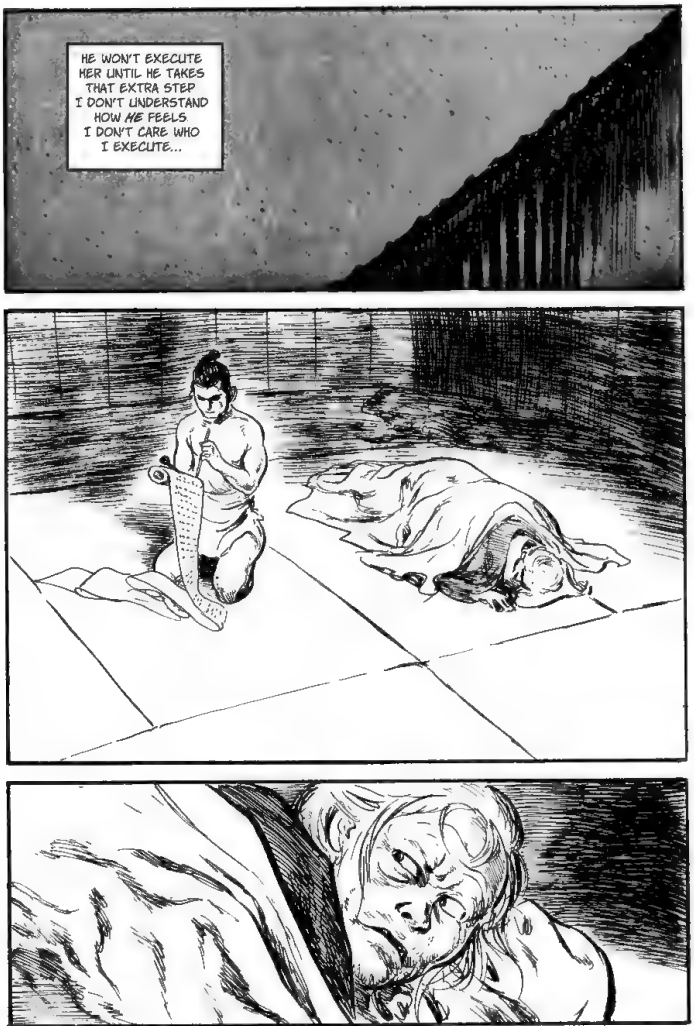
HEY!
IT'S COLD.

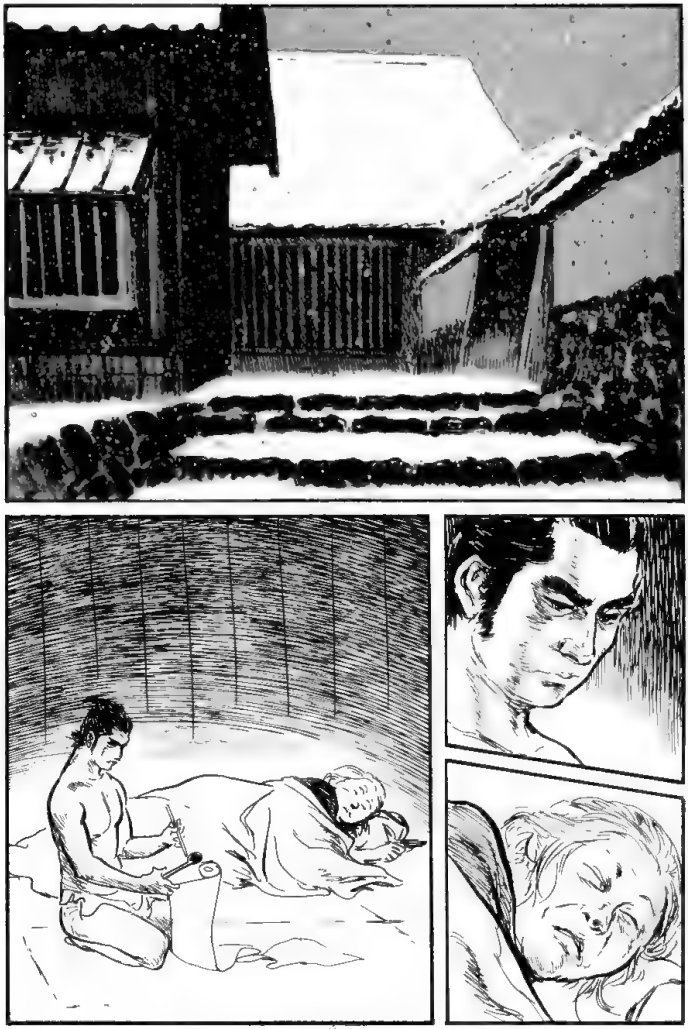
I NEED
MORE.


SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IS NECESSARY FOR THE EXECUTION OF THE INSANE AND FEEBLE-MINDED.
THEREFORE...
IF ONE DECAPITATES SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THEY HAVE COMMITTED A CRIME, THAT IS NOT A TRUE PUNISHMENT.
THE EXECUTIONER MUST WAIT UNTIL THAT PERSON RECOGNIZES WHAT THEY HAVE DONE AND REPENTS. THIS IS THE APPROPRIATE APPLICATION OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW.


ASAEMON IS UNCERTAIN AS TO WHETHER THE "POSSESSED" OLD WOMAN TRULY IS INSANE.
THAT IS WHY HE MUST EXAMINE HER.


EVEN I WOULD NOT EXECUTE SOMEONE WHO HAD GONE MAD AND WHO HAD NOT REALIZED THEY HAD DONE WRONG.
I WOULDN'T REEXAMINE HER, BUT HE IS FREE TO DO SO--AND TO FIND OUT WHETHER SHE IS SANE OR NOT.


HE WON'T EXECUTE HER UNTIL HE TAKES THAT EXTRA STEP
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW *HE* FEELS
I DON'T CARE WHO I EXECUTE...



ON
BABA
BABA
ONBABA
BABA

ON BABA BAKA
ON BABA BAKA
ON BABA BAKA SOWAKA
ON BASARA
SWISH
SWISH
KIRI
KIRI
BASARA BURITSU
MANDA MANDA

UN!
HOTTA!
WHOCK!
AAAH!
HUH!
AAAAH!
ON-BASARA
BARA UN!
HOTTA!
AAAH!

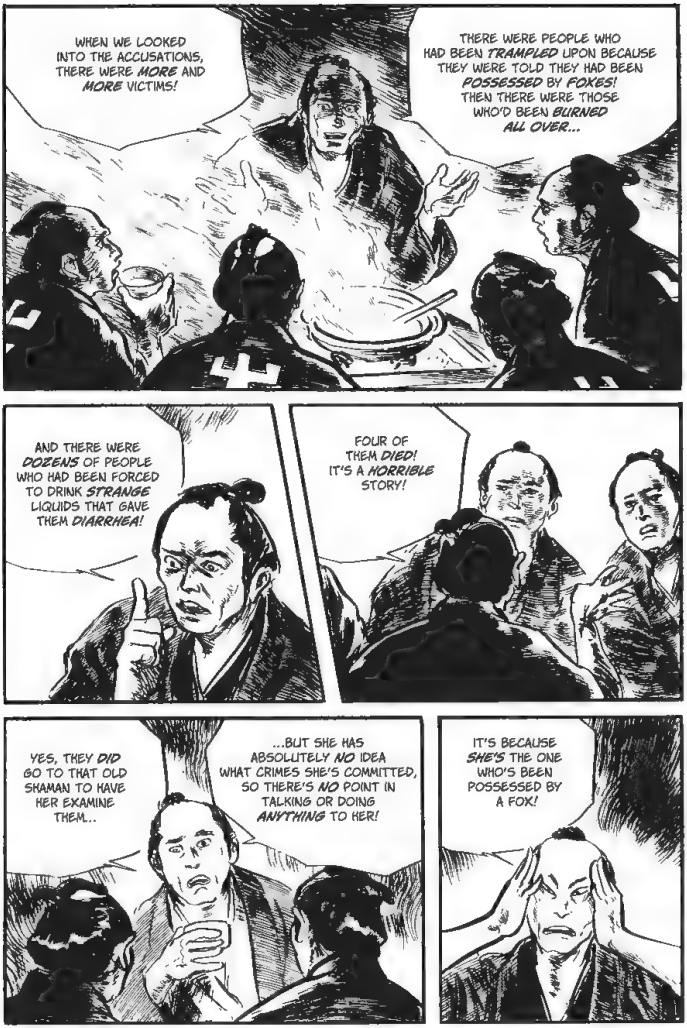
KIRI
KIRI
UN!
UN!
HOTTA!
HOTTA!
THUD! THUD!
AAAH!

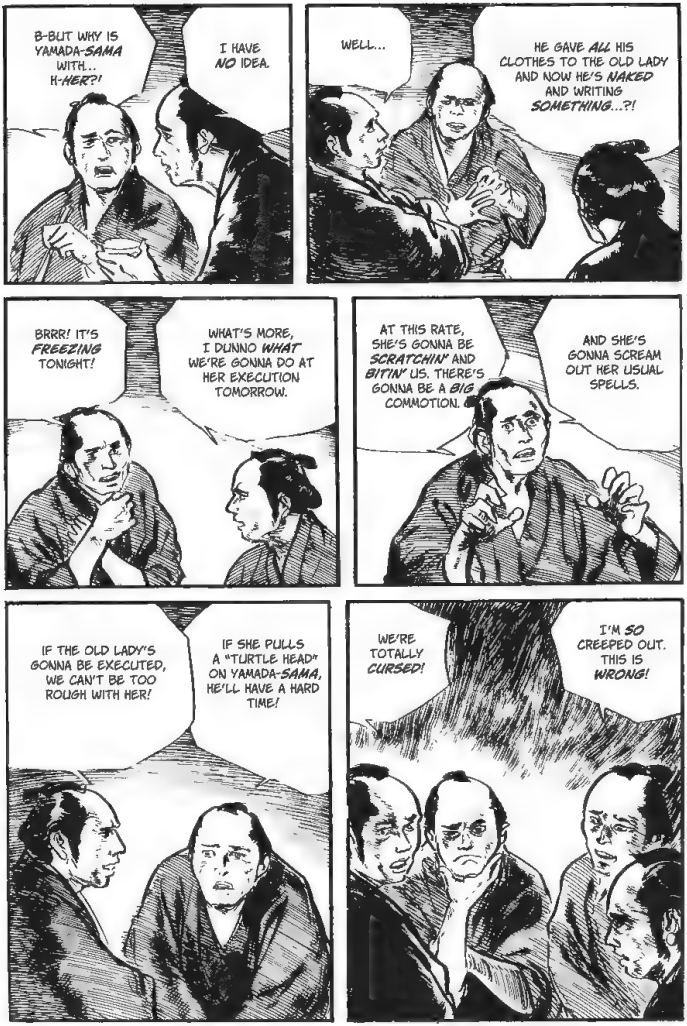
ON HADAMAKU
ON TATAGATO
NAUBABAYA
SOWAKA

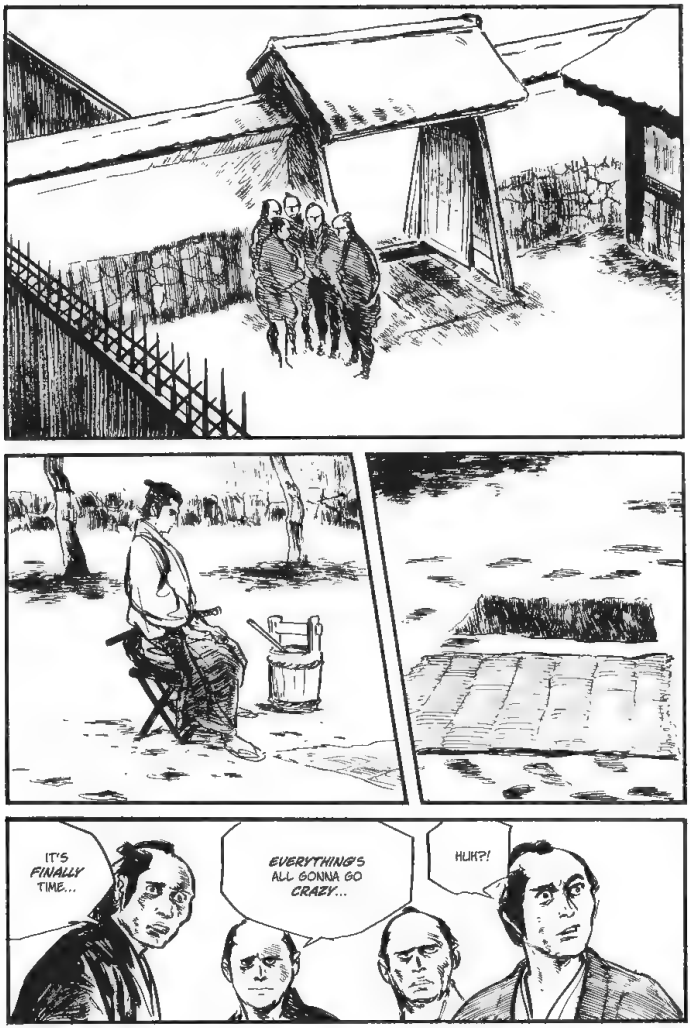
ON
SABA
BABA
KYUTA
SABA
KIRI
KIRI

DARUMA SABA
SABA
SOWAKA
AAAH!
ON BA SOWAKA
AAAH!

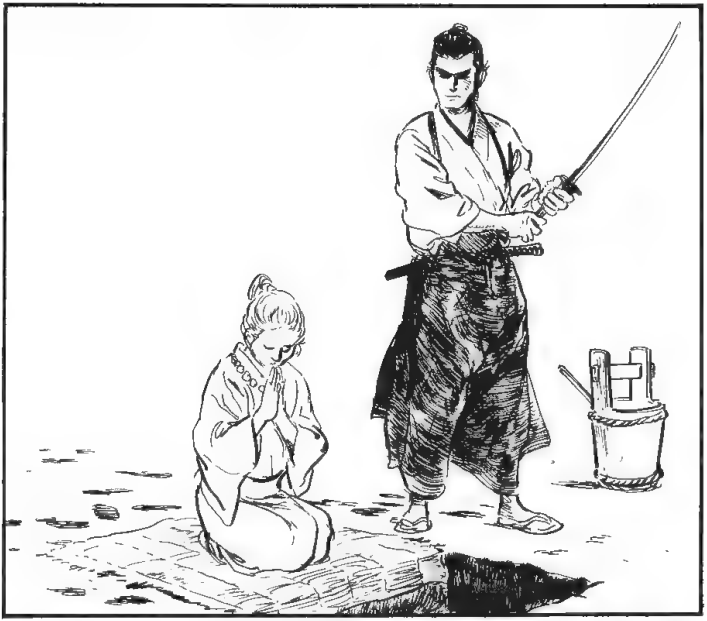
UN!
HOTTA!

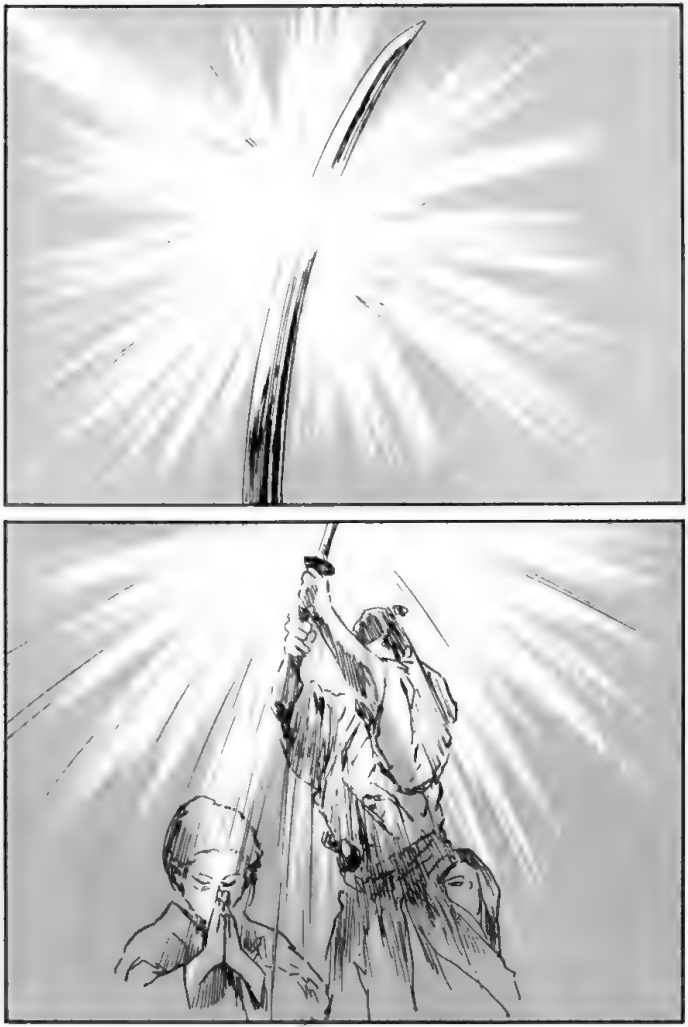

WHEN WE LOOKED INTO THE ACCUSATIONS, THERE WERE MORE AND MORE VICTIMS!
THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN TRAMPLED UPON BECAUSE THEY WERE TOLD THEY HAD BEEN POSSESSED BY FOXES! THEN THERE WERE THOSE WHO'D BEEN BURNED ALL OVER...
AND THERE WERE DOZENS OF PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN FORCED TO DRINK STRANGE LIQUIDS THAT GAVE THEM DIARRHEA!
FOUR OF THEM DIED! IT'S A HORRIBLE STORY!
YES, THEY DID GO TO THAT OLD SHAMAN TO HAVE HER EXAMINE THEM...
...BUT SHE HAS ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT CRIMES SHE'S COMMITTED, SO THERE'S NO POINT IN TALKING OR DOING ANYTHING TO HER!
IT'S BECAUSE SHE'S THE ONE WHO'S BEEN POSSESSED BY A FOX!

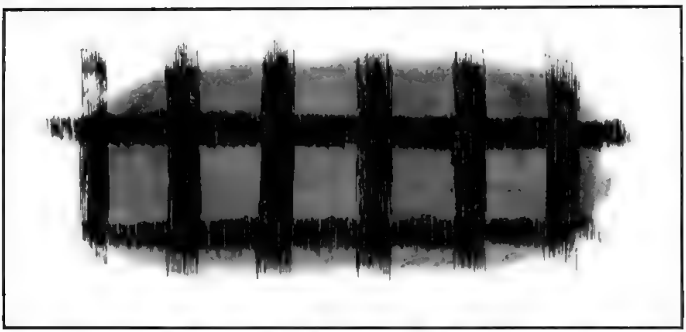

B-BUT WHY IS YAMADA-SAMA WITH... H-HER?!
I HAVE NO IDEA.
WELL...
HE GAVE ALL HIS CLOTHES TO THE OLD LADY AND NOW HE'S NAKED AND WRITING SOMETHING...?!
BRRR! IT'S FREEZING TONIGHT!
WHAT'S MORE, I DUNNO WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO AT HER EXECUTION TOMORROW.
AT THIS RATE, SHE'S GONNA BE SCRATCHIN' AND BITIN' US. THERE'S GONNA BE A BIG COMMOTION.
AND SHE'S GONNA SCREAM OUT HER USUAL SPELLS.
IF THE OLD LADY'S GONNA BE EXECUTED, WE CAN'T BE TOO ROUGH WITH HER!
IF SHE PULLS A "TURTLE HEAD" ON YAMADA-SAMA, HE'LL HAVE A HARD TIME!
WE'RE TOTALLY CURSED!
I'M SO CREEPED OUT. THIS IS WRONG!

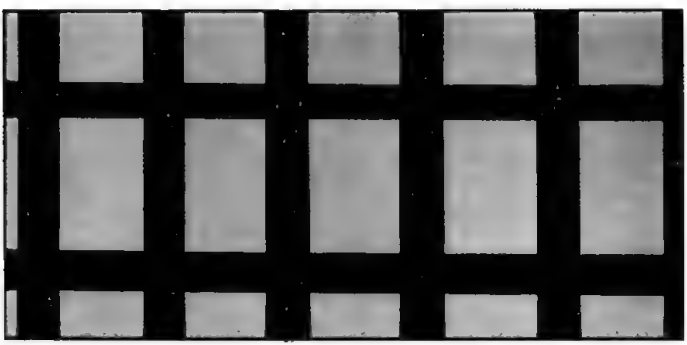

IT'S FINALLY TIME...
EVERYTHING'S ALL GONNA GO CRAZY...
HUH?!

THAT CAN'T BE...
IS THAT HER?!
IF POSSIBLE, I WOULD LIKE TO BE EXECUTED WITHOUT HIDING MY FACE.
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON?!

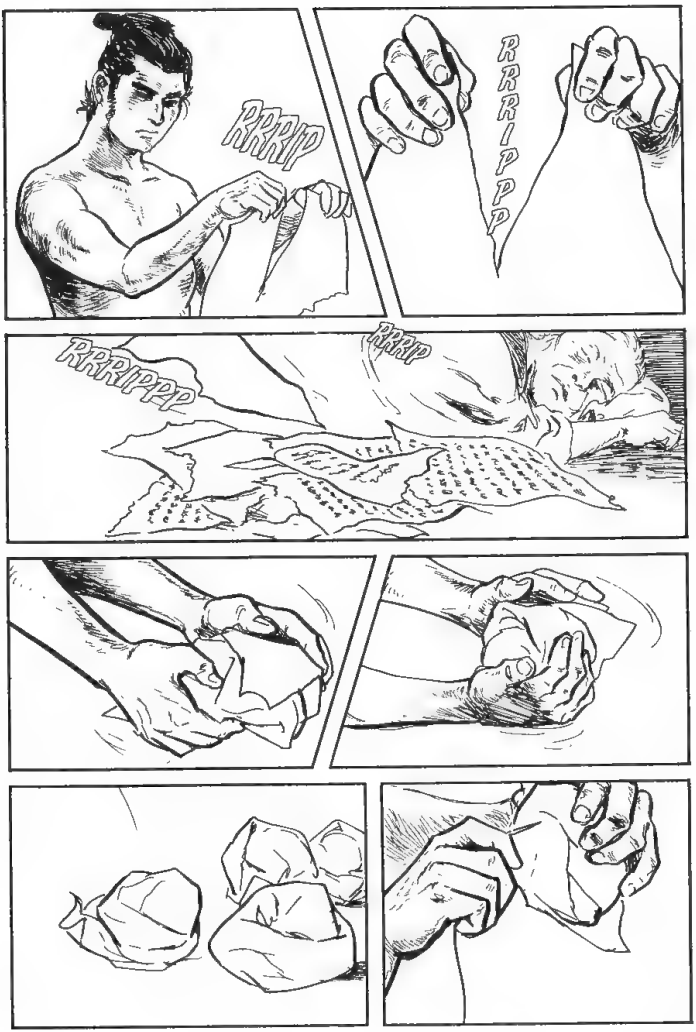


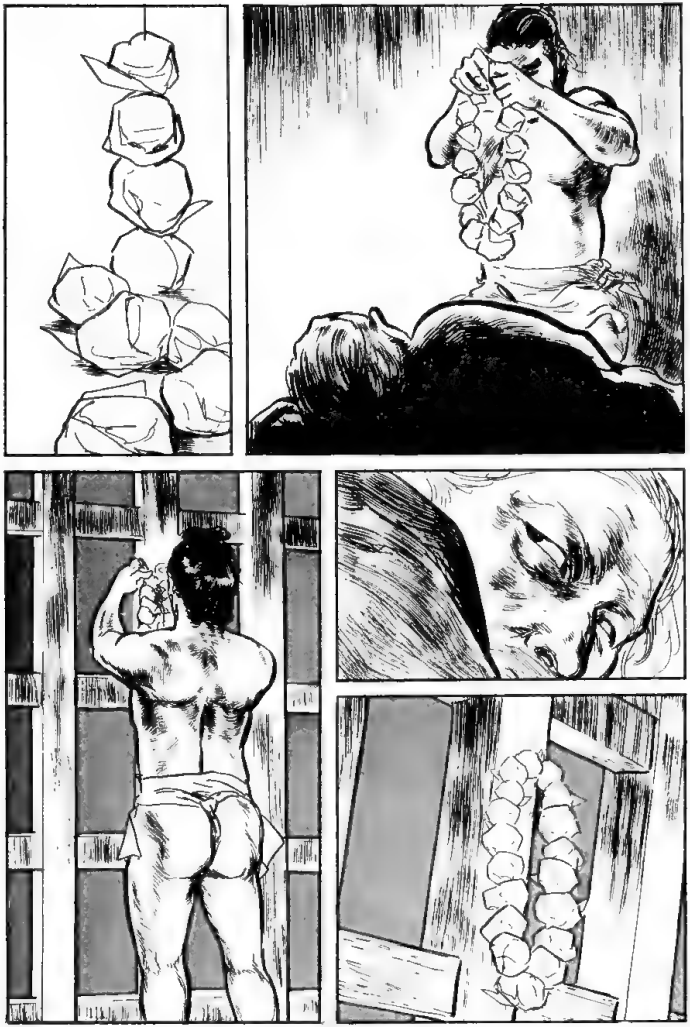






PUFF
PUFF


RRRIP
RRRRIPPP
RRRIPPP
RRRIP



BEING WHO I AM, I LOOKED INTO YOUR CASE.
ZZZZ
YOU WERE MARRIED AT SEVENTEEN. YOU HAD A CHILD, AND LOST YOUR HUSBAND AT TWENTY-ONE.
YOU DIDN'T REMARRY FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS AND HAVE REMAINED ALONE.
ZZZ
ZZZZ
SNORRK

SNORRRE
SSNORRRE
SSNORRRE
I THINK YOU'VE HAD A HARD LIFE.
MUMBLE MUMBLE
YOU RAISED YOUR DAUGHTER WITH LOVING CARE AS IF SHE WERE A PEARL IN YOUR PALM.
SHE BECAME THE HEAD PRIESTESS OF A SHRINE AND MARRIED.
MUMBLE MUMBLE
SNORRRE
SSNORRRE
YOU WERE A FINE SHAMAN, BUT PEOPLE SAY THAT YOU STARTED TO ACT STRANGELY AROUND THAT TIME.

I AM *MUCH* YOUNGER THAN YOU, BUT I THINK I CAN UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS.
THEIR MARRIAGE WAS LIKE A HARMLESS MOTE IN YOUR EYE THAT GREW INTO SOMETHING *BIGGER*, SOMETHING *BLAZING* WITH *PAIN*. YOU WORRIED ABOUT THEIR PRIVATE LIFE AND WERE UNABLE TO SLEEP AT NIGHT.
PERHAPS SHE WAS NOT JUST YOUR CHILD, BUT ALSO YOUR *COMPANION*.
PEOPLE SAY THAT YOU'RE *MAD*. BUT *I* DON'T THINK YOU ARE.
I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT EVERYTHING THAT YOU'VE BEEN REPRESSING FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS HAS COME BURSTING OUT AT LAST.
TO CONFIRM THAT, I *HAD* TO HAVE YOU LET ME SPEND THE NIGHT WITH YOU...

I DON'T JUST CUT OFF PEOPLE'S HEADS. I THINK I CUT THEM OFF FROM THEIR *CRIMES* AS WELL.
THE EXECUTIONER AND THE EXECUTED LIE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH. THE EXECUTIONER, UNDERSTANDING THE HEART OF THE EXECUTED, PRAYING FOR THEM IN THE WORLD BEYOND, CUTS THEM OFF FROM THEIR CRIMES IN *THIS* WORLD.
THAT IS WHY I DO NOT EXECUTE THOSE WHO ARE NOT OF SOUND MIND. THE EXECUTED MUST RECOGNIZE THAT HE IS A PERSON.
CONFESS AS A *WOMAN.*
BE A *PERSON!*

W...WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
Y-YOU CAN'T BE...
NO... YOU CAN'T...
THE EXECUTED MUST *ALSO* UNDERSTAND THE HEART OF THE *EXECUTIONER*. CONFESS *EVERYTHING* TO ME AS A *WOMAN*.

S-STOP IT...
S-STOP IT... PLEASE...
OH... I BEG YOU... DON'T MAKE ME DO THIS...
E-EVERYTHING YOU SAID IS *TRUE*...
I *AM*... SANE... OH...

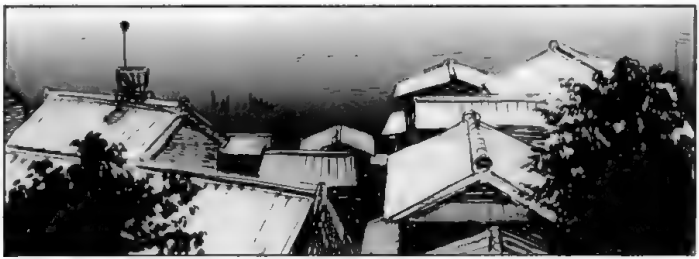
AAAH!!

AAAH!
AAAH!!

BZHHH!

the thirty-second

The Bamboo-Splitter



GET OUTTA HERE!
THERE'S NOTHING TO SEE!

THEY'VE ALL BEEN STABBED ONLY ONCE IN THE HEART!

THE WEAPON WAS A *DAGGER*, OR SOMETHING *LIKE* ONE.
THIS *HAS* TO BE THE WORK OF AN EXPERIENCED KILLER.
THIS IS THE *THIRD* INCIDENT OF THE SAME TYPE SINCE LAST MONTH...
PHEW...
I CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT.
MATTER HOW MUCH I THINK ABOUT IT, I *STILL* DON'T GET IT.
THE OUTER GATES AND THE DOOR TO THE GARDEN WERE OPENED FROM *INSIDE*.
THE CULPRIT BURST *IN* WITHOUT LEAVING ANY TRACES FROM *OUTSIDE*.

SO COULD IT HAVE BEEN SOMEONE THEY *KNEW*?!
THE VICTIMS WERE BAREFOOT IN THEIR NIGHT CLOTHES. THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE IF THEY HAD DIED *OUTSIDE*.
THE BLOOD TRACES INDICATE THAT THEY HAD BEEN KILLED RIGHT *HERE*.
SO HE COULDN'T HAVE KILLED THEM *INSIDE* AND TOSSED THEIR BODIES *OUTSIDE*...
SHIT!
NOTHING'S MAKING ANY SENSE!

NOT THE FIRST TIME AT THE IMADO HOUSE OF MINOYA...
...ONE DEAD OUTSIDE THE WALL...
...ANOTHER OUTSIDE THE BACK DOOR...

...AND MINOYA AND HIS WIFE IN THE YARD...
...ALL BAREFOOT IN THEIR NIGHT CLOTHES...

...AND THE DOORS HAD BEEN OPENED FROM *INSIDE*....

FOUND ANY CLUES?

HE DIDN'T LEAVE A SINGLE TRACE. IT'S BECAUSE THE WEATHER'S SO *DRY*.
HE *CHOSE* THAT DAY TO DO HIS DIRTY WORK. THAT'S WHAT KIND OF GUY HE IS.
IT'S JUST LIKE THE MINOYA AND KODAYA KILLINGS!
THEY TOOK PLACE ON *DRY* NIGHTS!
WHAT'S THAT BAMBOO ?!
OH, IT FELL OUTSIDE THE BACK DOOR.

SHIT!
KUNK
LOOK AROUND SOME MORE! LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED!
AREN'T THERE ANY CLUES?! KEEP LOOKING!
DAMN! AT THIS RATE, THERE COULD BE A FOURTH MURDER!
WE'LL HAVE TO SEND OUT NOTICES TO COMPANY HOUSES WHERE NO ONE SEEMS TO BE LIVING AND TO VILLAS.
DOORS WILL HAVE TO BE LOCKED AND NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO GO OUT AT NIGHT!

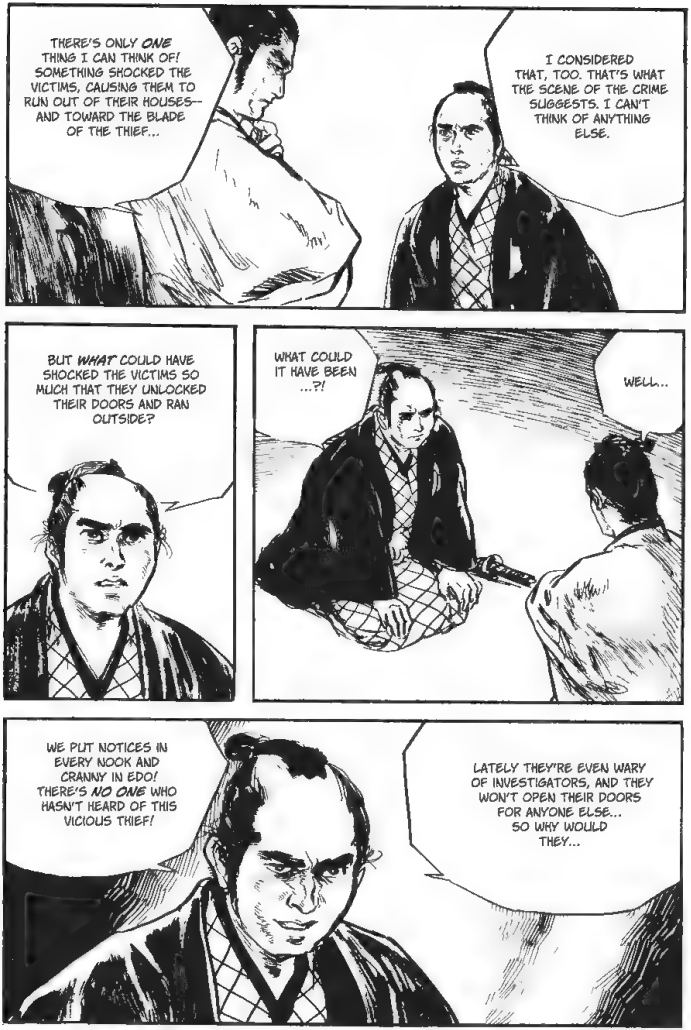
PWEEET!
PWEEET!
PWEEET!
御用
御用
御用
御用
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP

OH NO...
NOT
AGAIN!

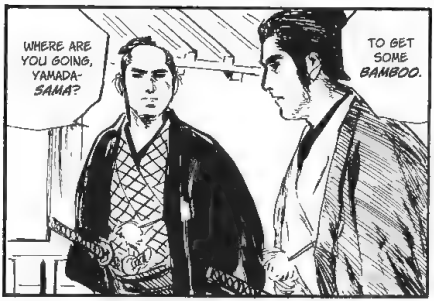
SHIT, IT'S EXACTLY THE SAME!
SIR! THE MONEY BOX WAS EMPTY, AND GOT THROWN OUT!
EVEN THOUGH WE WARNED THEM... W-WHY WERE THE DOORS OPENED FROM THE INSIDE?!
AND NOW ALL OF EDO'S GONNA BE QUIVERING IN TERROR!
WHACK!

I DON'T GET IT!
THAT HURT! SHIT!

HMMM...
HMMM... STRANGE...
ON DRY NIGHTS, THEY WERE KILLED *OUTSIDE* IN THEIR *BEDWEAR*...
IT DOESN'T MAKE *ANY* SENSE. SO I THOUGHT I'D ASK *YOU*, YAMADA-*SAMA*...
HOW WERE THEY WOUNDED?
WITH ONE STAB INTO EACH OF THEIR HEARTS! WE THINK THE KILLER'S *EXPERIENCED*.


THERE'S ONLY *ONE* THING I CAN THINK OF! SOMETHING SHOCKED THE VICTIMS, CAUSING THEM TO RUN OUT OF THEIR HOUSES-- AND TOWARD THE BLADE OF THE THIEF...
I CONSIDERED THAT, TOO. THAT'S WHAT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME SUGGESTS. I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE.
BUT *WHAT* COULD HAVE SHOCKED THE VICTIMS SO MUCH THAT THEY UNLOCKED THEIR DOORS AND RAN OUTSIDE?
WHAT COULD IT HAVE BEEN ...?!
WELL...
WE PUT NOTICES IN EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY IN EDO! THERE'S *NO ONE* WHO HASN'T HEARD OF THIS VICIOUS THIEF!
LATELY THEY'RE EVEN WARY OF INVESTIGATORS, AND THEY WON'T OPEN THEIR DOORS FOR ANYONE ELSE... SO WHY WOULD THEY...

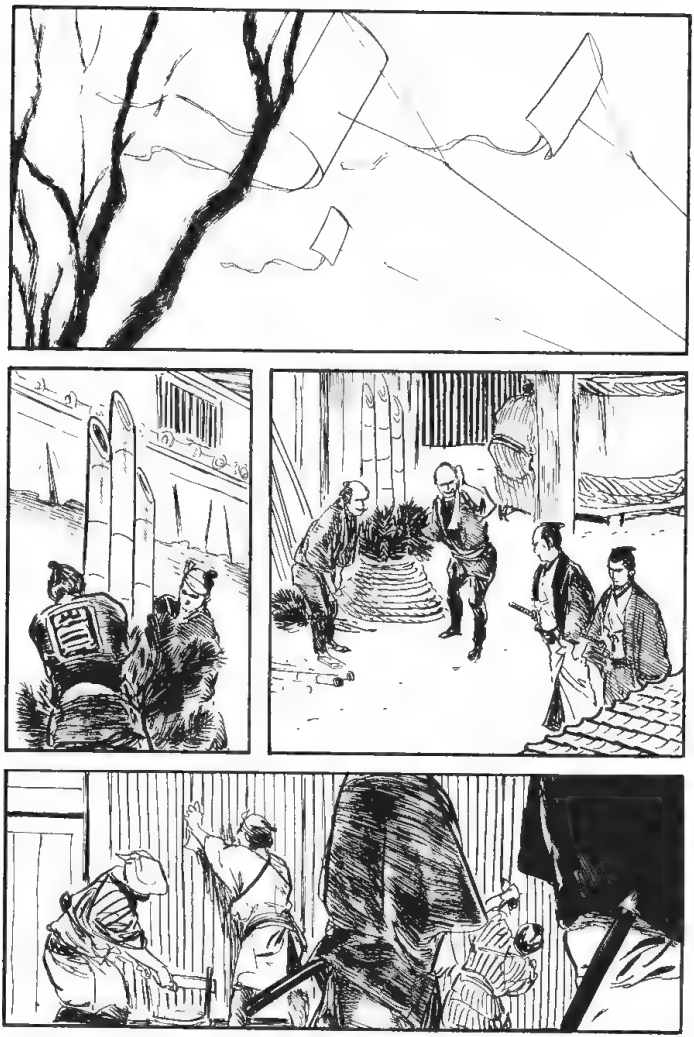
THERE'S ONLY ONE EXCEPTION.
FIRE.
YES! IF THERE WERE A FIRE, PEOPLE WOULD BE SHOCKED AND WOULD RUN OUTSIDE.
BUT THERE WERE NO TRACES OF ANY FIRES.
WHAT IF SOMEONE YELLED, "FIRE"...?
ANYONE COULD'VE DONE THAT... BUT EVERYONE'S SUSPICIOUS, SO UNLESS THEY ACTUALLY SAW A FIRE, THEY WOULDN'T RUN OUTSIDE, WOULD THEY?

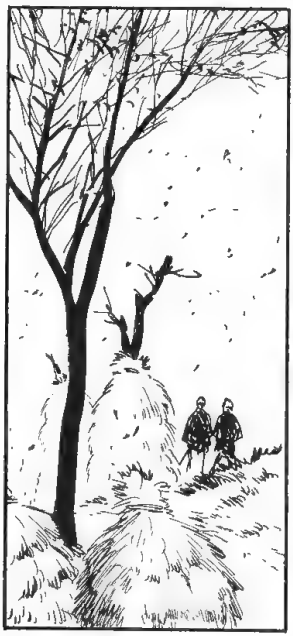

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, YAMADA-SAMA?
TO GET SOME BAMBOO.

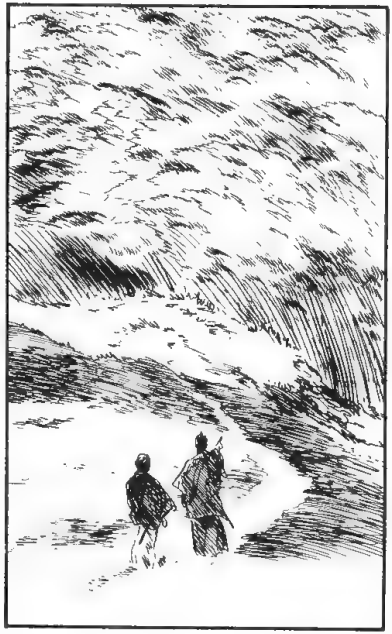
DID YOU SAY... BAMBOO?

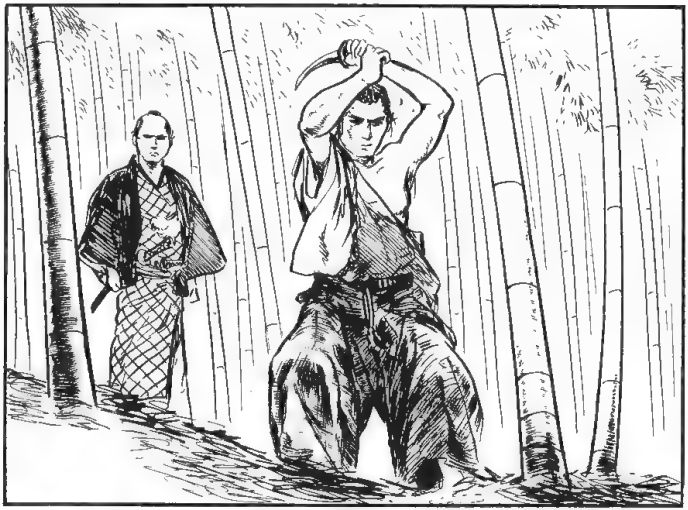
THE NEW YEAR'S COMING, AND I THOUGHT I'D PUT UP A KADOMATSU.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO COULD MAKE A KADOMATSU...
YES, BUT NO ONE WOULD PUT UP SOMETHING SO AUSPICIOUS AT MY PLACE FOR ME.
LET ME DO IT.
LET ME CUT UP AND GATHER THE BAMBOO. I COULDN'T LIVE WITH MYSELF IF I DIDN'T.
I BEG YOU. PLEASE LET ME GO WITH YOU.

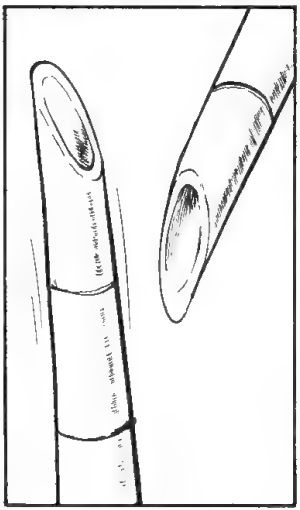


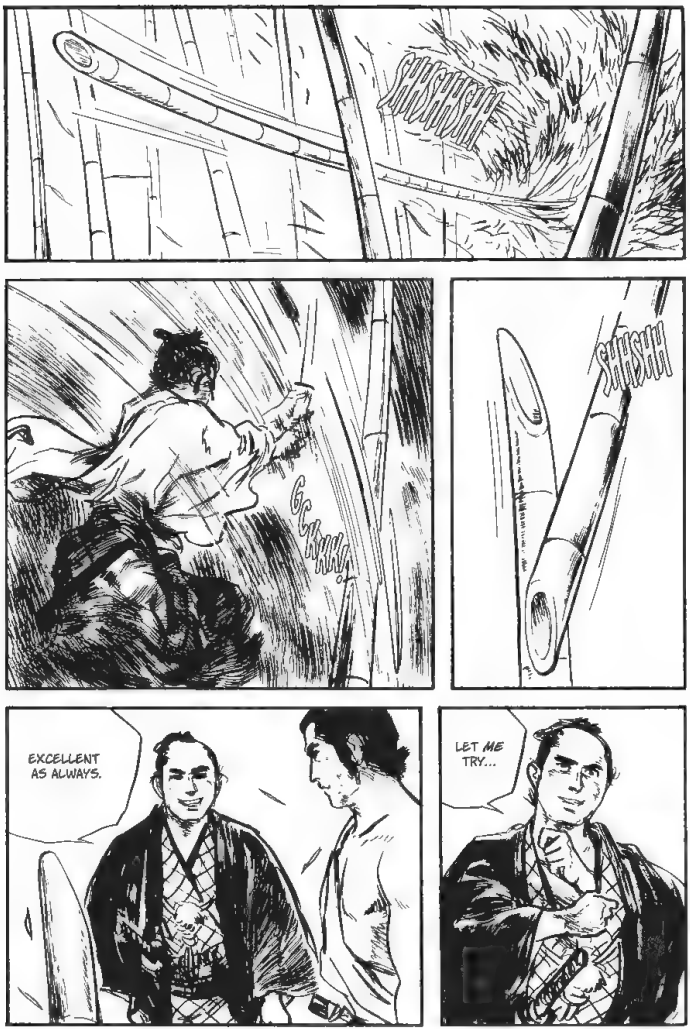






KKKH

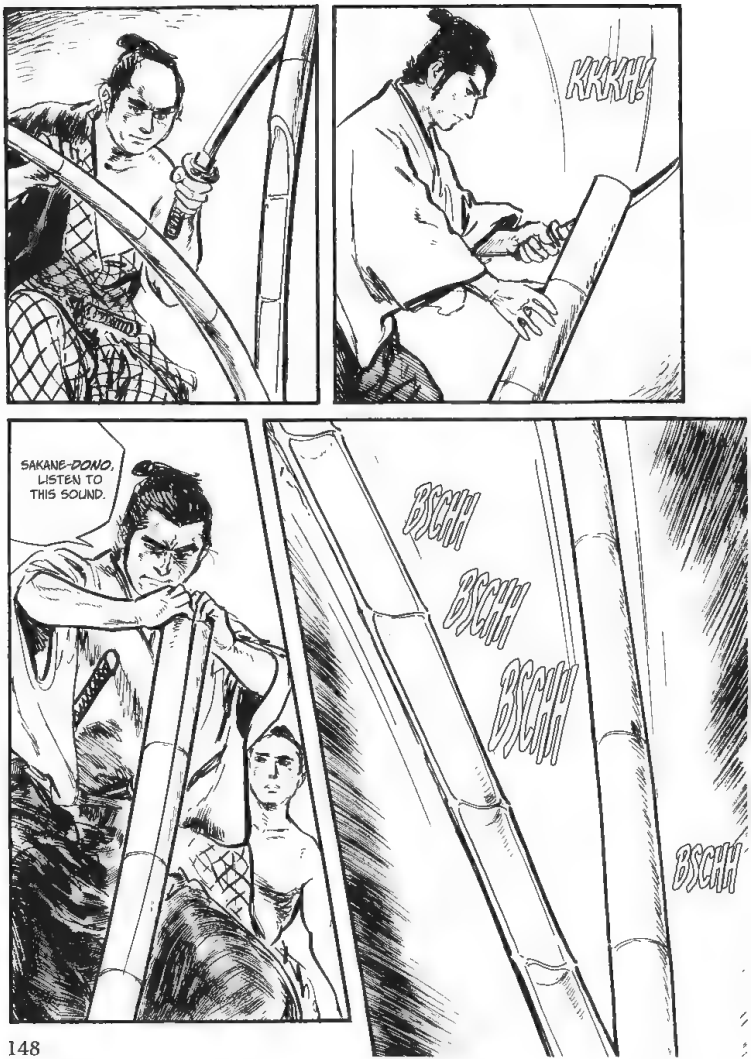



SHASHASHA
GRRR
SHASH
EXCELLENT AS ALWAYS.
LET ME TRY...

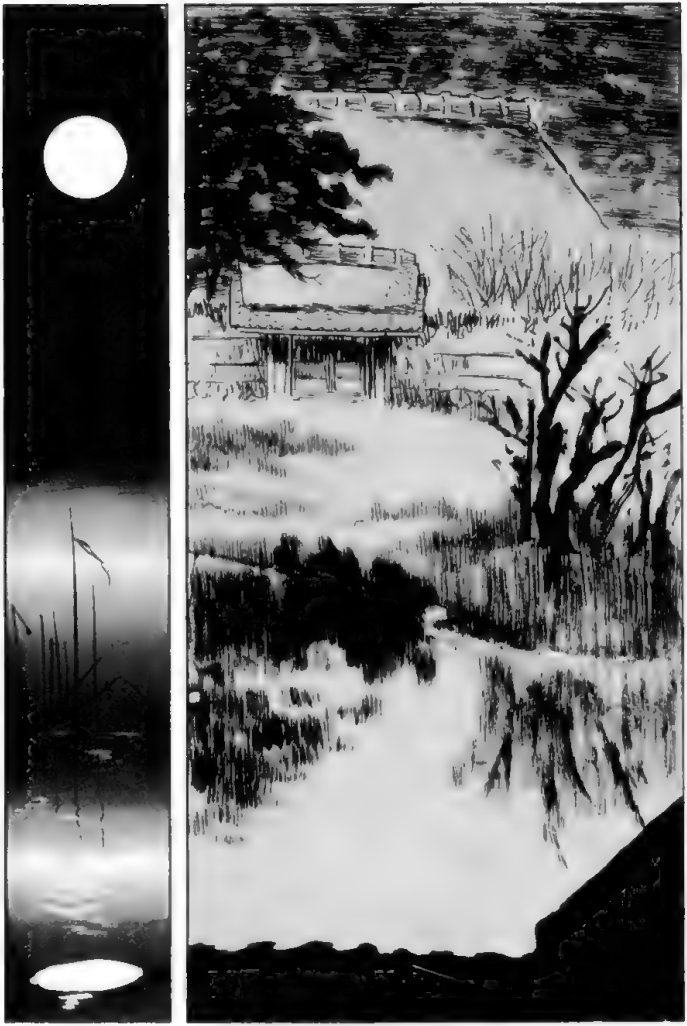
BZHHH!
GINK!

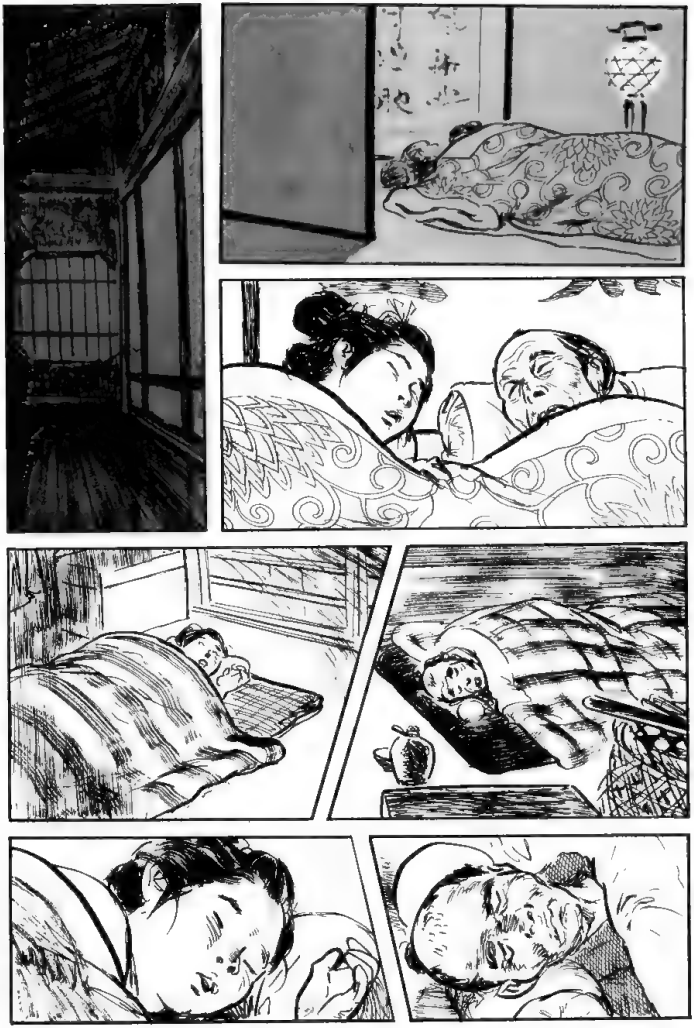
THINK OF SLICING INSTEAD OF CUTTING.
O-OKAY.
GLNK!
OOH...
OOF!

SHIT!
URGH...
HA, HA!
IT'S
HOPELESS!
HA, HA!
DAMMIT!
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH


KKKH!
SAKANE-DONO, LISTEN TO THIS SOUND.
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH

DOESN'T IT SOUND LIKE A *FIRE* BURSTING OUT?
OH!
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT... THE *BAMBOO*... CUT INTO PIECES... AT THE CRIME SCENE...
E-EXCUSE ME!



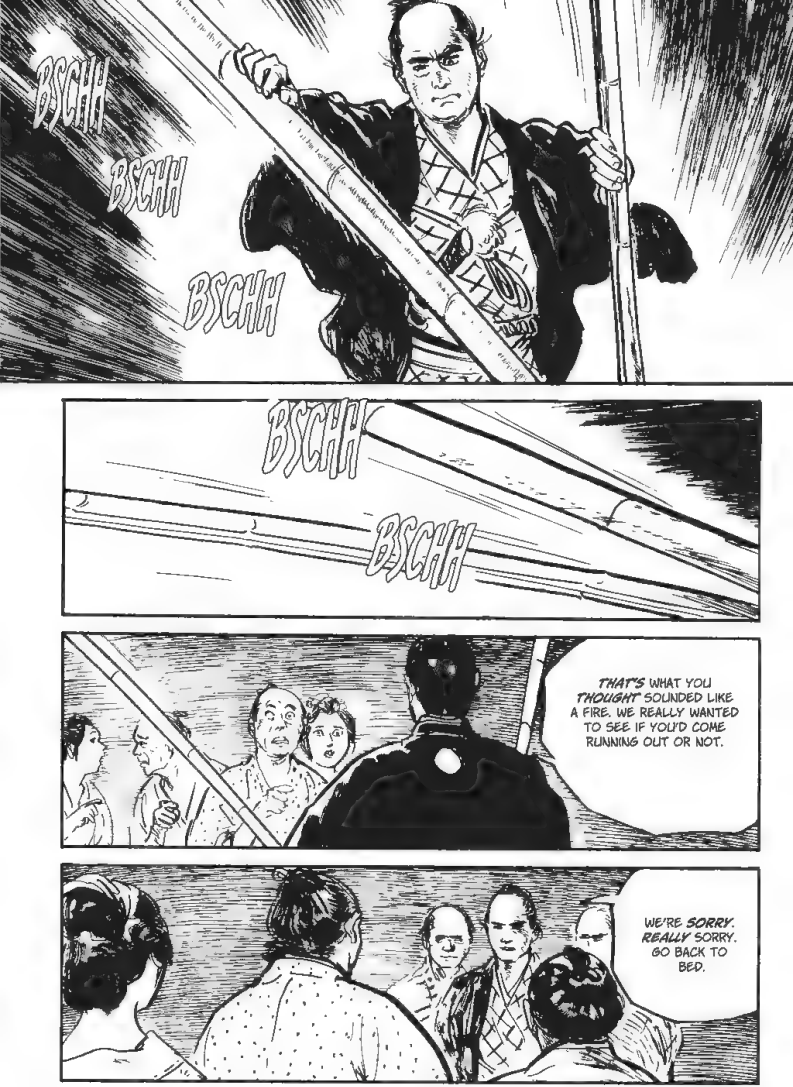


BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
FIRE!
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH

FIRE!
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
RRRRIP
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH

I-I SEE...
YOU WERE RIGHT, SIR. THIS *WOULD* SHOCK ANYONE AND CAUSE THEM TO RUN OUTSIDE.
DAMN, HE THOUGHT OF SPLITTING BAMBOO TO TRICK PEOPLE INTO BELIEVING THERE WAS A FIRE.
AND IF THERE WERE EVEN JUST *ONE* SURVIVOR, HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO USE THE SAME TRICK AGAIN. *THAT'S* WHY HE HAD TO KILL *EVERYONE*.

IT'S THE *POLICE!* WHERE'S THE *FIRE...?!*
CALM DOWN. SORRY ABOUT THAT. THERE'S NO FIRE. WE WERE JUST DOING A LITTLE *TEST.*
?!
SORRY, BUT COULD I ASK-- DID YOU REALLY THINK THERE WAS A FIRE?
I *DID* I SUDDENLY HEARD A FIRE BURSTING OUT-- BSCH, BSCH...
YOU TOO?
Y-YEAH. I RAN OUT LIKE *MAD.*
IT SOUNDED LIKE I WAS SURROUNDED BY A *SEA* OF FIRE... BSCH, BSCH...
SO WHAT *WAS* THAT NOISE?
IT WAS *THIS!*


BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
BSCHH
THAT'S WHAT YOU THOUGHT SOUNDED LIKE A FIRE. WE REALLY WANTED TO SEE IF YOU'D COME RUNNING OUT OR NOT.
WE'RE SORRY. REALLY SORRY. GO BACK TO BED.

IF YOU EVER HEAR THAT NOISE AGAIN, DON'T JUST GO RUNNING OUT.
ALL RIGHT?
WE FIGURED HIM OUT GET HIM!
YEAH.
GOTCHA!

'SCUSE ME, BOYS...
WHAT THE--?
WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' TRYIN' TO SCARE US LIKE THAT, LADY?!
SHE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A STREET-WALKER...

GIVE ME A MOMENT.
WHAT?! WHAT FOR?! WE'RE BUSY!
I'VE GOT GOOD NEWS FOR YOU. I KNOW...
...WHO SCARED THOSE PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR HOUSES WITH BAMBOO.
WHAT?!
SO I'M GONNA TELL YOU WHERE HE IS!

DZHH!
URGH!
DSSS!
AAARGH!
WHUMP!

HEH, HEH. TOO BAD YOU FIGURED ME OUT.
I'M STILL NOT DONE YET.
THE MISTRESS' HOUSE YOU TESTED MY TECHNIQUE ON WAS ONE THAT I WAS SCOPING OUT ANYWAY.
HEH, HEH.
KASAJIRŌ THE MAT-CATCHER... JUST AS I EXPECTED.
HE NOTICED I WAS SPLITTING BAMBOO. GOOD FOR HIM. HEH, HEH.

OH!

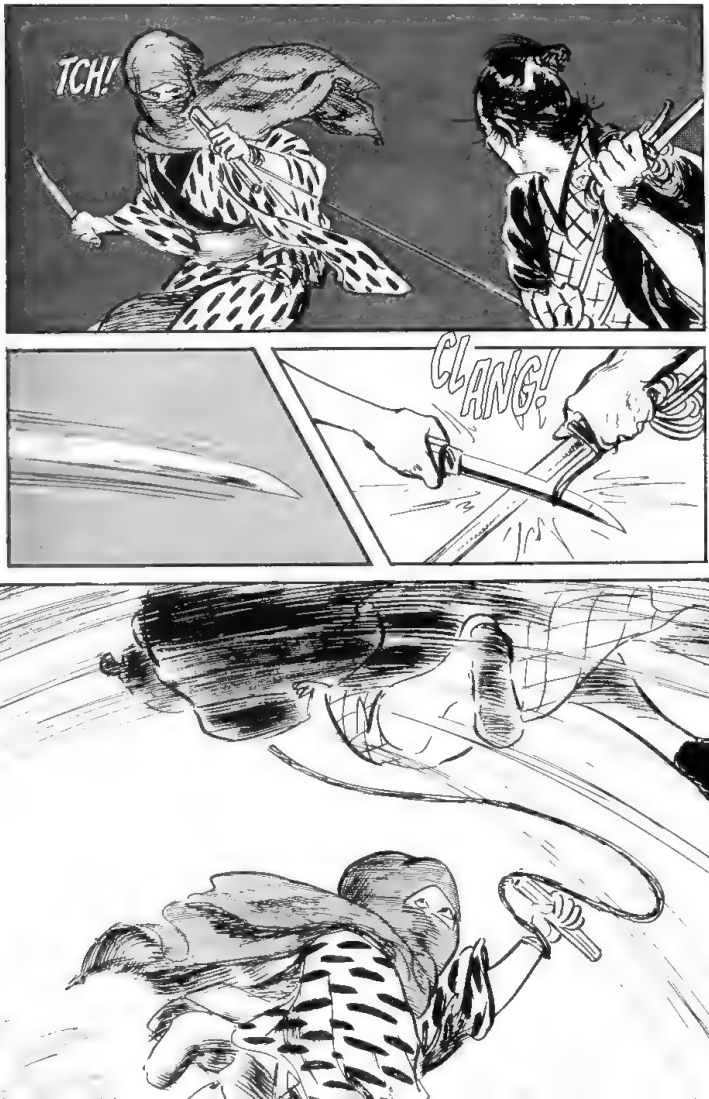
WHOOMP!

WHO... ARE... YOU?!
HEH, HEH. IT'S *SILLY* TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, BUT ANYWAY...I WAS BORN IN *ENSHŪ* IN *HAMAMATSU*, LOST MY PARENTS AT *FOURTEEN*...
...I CROSS THE COAST OF WHITE WAVES, WORKING AT NIGHT FOR A LIVING. I DON'T JUST STEAL. I *DO* DIRTY DEEDS *TOO*. HEH, HEH. I'LL GIVE YOU A *GIFT* YOU CAN TAKE TO *HELL*!
I AM KANSUKE THE FEMALE BAMBOO-SPLITTER!
SO IT WAS *YOU*!

NOW THAT YOU KNOW MY SECRET, I CAN'T LET YOU LIVE!
I ALREADY SENT A COUPLE OF OKAPPIKI TO HELL ALREADY.
W-WHAT...?
PREPARE TO DIE!

CLANG!
WHOOSH!
MMPH!

HEH, HEH.
WHICH IS IT GONNA BE, THE KNIFE OR THE SCABBARD? HEH, HEH.
C'MON, CHOOSE ONE!
SH-SHIT...
SHHHH
WHOOSH!


TCH!
CLANG!

WHOOSH!
DSHHH!
OOH...

GOTCHA IN THE GUTS! YOU CAUGHT IT, AND YOU CAN'T PULL IT OUT. YOU ARE SO GOOD AT CATCHING, AREN'T YOU, KASAJIRŌ?
PULL IT OUT, AND BLOOD'LL COME GUSHING OUT! SO DON'T MOVE IT! CONGRATULATIONS! HEH, HEH!
OOH...
OOH... D-DAMN...
OOH...

LOOKS LIKE THAT'S THE END OF YOU! NOBODY'S BETTER WITH DAGGERS THAN ME!
YOU GOT A LOT OF GUTS GOING UP AGAINST ME WOUNDED LIKE THAT.
I'M SO TOUCHED. HEH, HEH. MAYBE I SHOULD HEAR YOUR LAST WORDS!
HEH, HEH.
WHO... THE HELL... ARE YOU?!
SWOOSH

ITCH
PWEEET!

PWEET
PWEEET!
PWEEET!
PWEEET!
PWEEET!
PWEEET!
PWEEET!
DAMN!
WHOOSH!
DSSS!
OOH...

坂根
SAKANE
HE'S LATE.
THUMP

IS IT YOU, DEAR?
YOUR LOCK WAS SO EASY. HEH, HEH.
WHO ARE YOU?!
SO YOU'RE KASAJIRŌ'S WIFE, HUH?

YOU SHOULD COME WITH ME. ALTHOUGH I DID GET TO YOUR HUSBAND, I DIDN'T STAB HIM TO DEATH.
IF YOU ESCAPE AND TALK, I'LL BE IN TROUBLE.
W-WHAT?!
THAT'S WHY I'M TAKING YOU HOSTAGE.
M-MY HUSBAND... Y-YOU...
YES! HEH, HEH.
YOU SAID YOU STABBED HIM, DIDN'T YOU?!

RIGHT IN HIS BELLY!
SO YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DID ALL THIS...

HEH, HEH...

HOW DARE YOU...

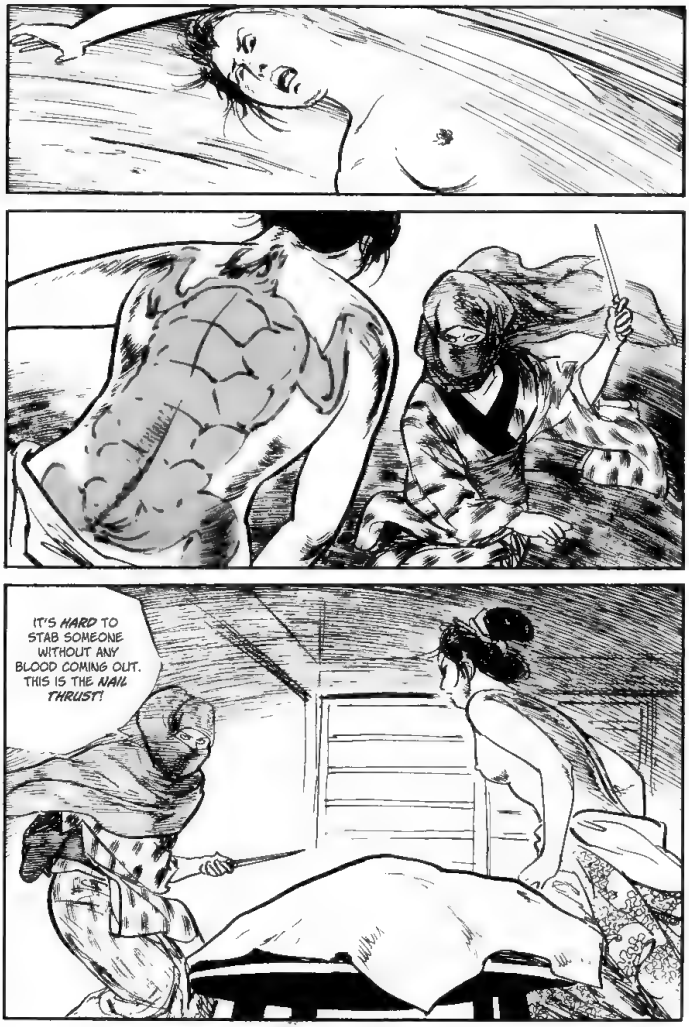
M-MY HUSBAND... Y-YOU BITCH!

I'LL KILL YOU!
Y-YOU'RE REALLY KASAJIRŌ'S WIFE...
FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE, I'M KASAJIRŌ'S "SHINKO THE KAPPA"!
HOW DARE YOU... BITCH!

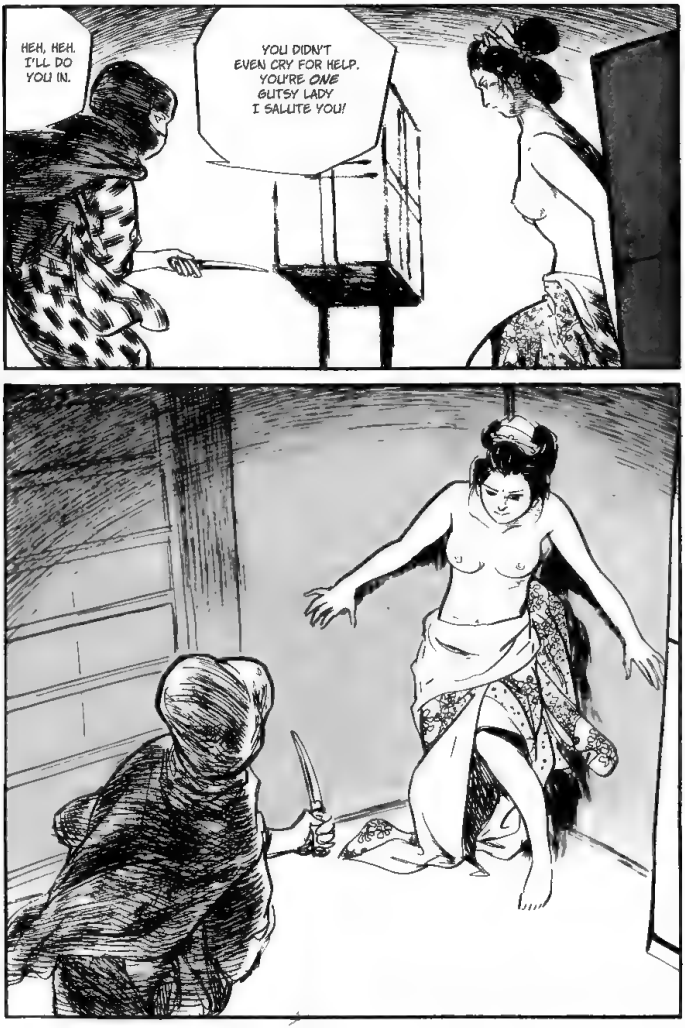
I HAD NO IDEA WHAT A *WHORE* KASAJIRŌ WAS SLEEPING WITH!
THAT DOESN'T MATTER. COME WITH ME. WHORE OR NOT, YOU *ARE* KASAJIRŌ'S LITTLE WOMAN.
BITCH!
DON'T MESS WITH ME!
PUT UP A STRUGGLE, AND I'LL SLASH UP THE *KAPPA* ON YOUR *BACK*--AND YOUR *FACE*!
DO YOUR *WORST*! I'M ALL KASAJIRŌ'S FROM *TOP* TO *BOTTOM*!
IF ANYTHING'S HAPPENED TO HIM, I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT HIM!

SO BRING IT ON!
I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE YOU ALIVE.
I COULD CARRY YOUR CORPSE AWAY. BUT I COULD LET YOU LIVE.
YOU'LL STRUGGLE NO MATTER WHAT. HEH, HEH.
AND THAT'S FINE WITH ME. HEH, HEH.
SO IS THAT WHAT YOU INTENDED ALL ALONG?!
HEH, HEH. HOW DO YOU WANNA DIE? FAST OR SLOW? HEH, HEH.

WHOOSH!
SWISH!


IT'S *HARD* TO STAB SOMEONE WITHOUT ANY BLOOD COMING OUT. THIS IS THE *NAIL THRUST*!

ONE HAS TO THRUST ONLY THE WIDTH OF THE BLADE PRECISELY THREE *SUN* INTO THE FLESH TO AVOID CUTTING UP THE MEAT!
WHAM!
CLATTER
CLUNK


HEH, HEH. I'LL DO YOU IN.
YOU DIDN'T EVEN CRY FOR HELP. YOU'RE *ONE* GUTSY LADY I SALUTE YOU!

HEH,
HEH.

HEH, HEH. GIVEN UP ALREADY? HOW NICE OF YOU TO UNTIE YOUR HAIR!
NOW LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.
SAY YOUR PRAYERS!
WHOOSH!

OOF!
MMPH!

URGHHH
DAMN YOU!

URGHHH
GUKHH!

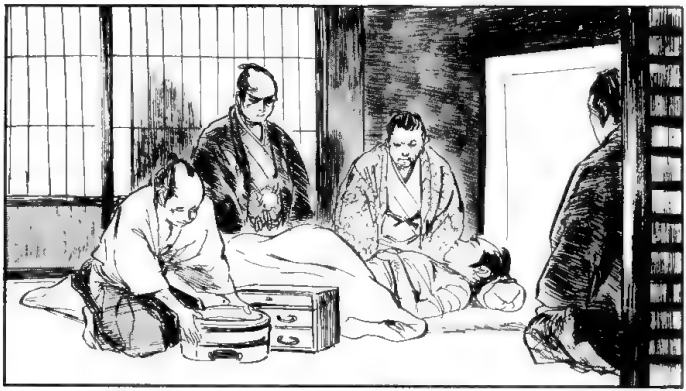
DEAR!

南町奉行所
SOUTHERN TOWN COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

KASJIRO!
DEAR!

NOOO!
YOU CAN'T BE DEAD!

I-IT'S...
I'M SAKANE KASAJIRŌ'S *WIFE!*
SO SHE'S THE ONE THEY CALL THE *KAPPA*...
WHAT DID HE EVER SEE IN A *SLUT* LIKE HER?
BUT SHE'S SURE *PRETTY*.
YEAH, BUT WHAT ABOUT *SAKANE*?!
RYŌHAKU-*SENSEI* FROM THE HEALTH OFFICE IS TAKING CARE OF HIM...



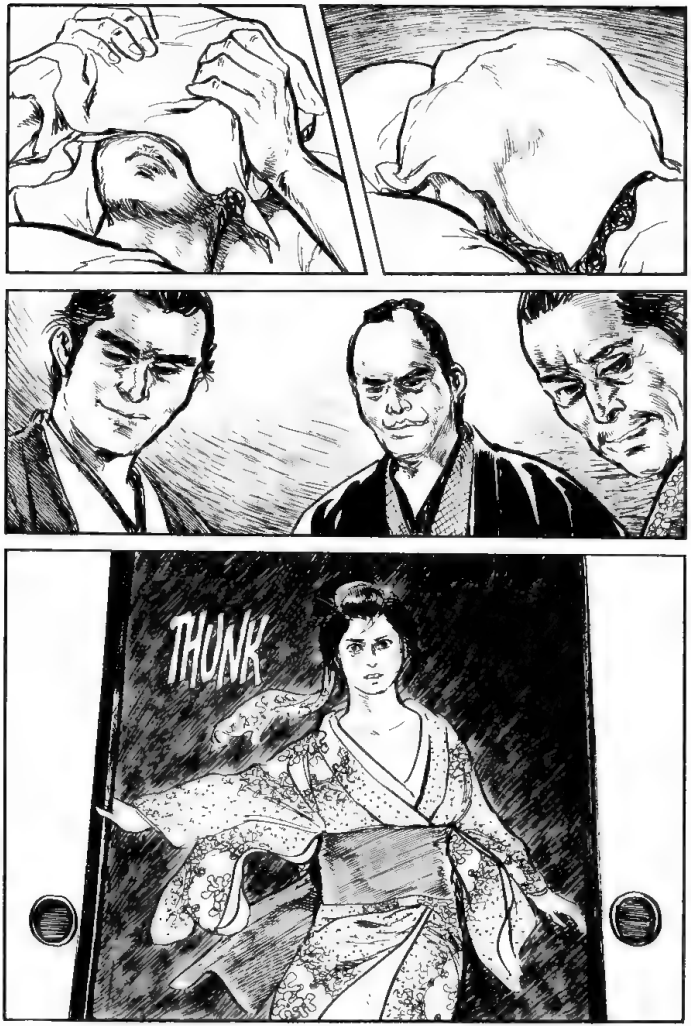
IT'S GOOD THAT YOU DIDN'T PULL OUT THE DAGGER.

ALTHOUGH HE WASN'T STRUCK IN A VITAL SPOT, HE WOULD HAVE BLED TOO MUCH IF THE DAGGER HAD BEEN REMOVED.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THE CULPRIT WAS A *WOMAN*...
AND I LET HER *GET AWAY*. HOW *HUMILIATING*.

BUT AT LEAST YOU'RE STILL *ALIVE*.

IT'S GOOD ENOUGH THAT YOU FIGURED OUT IT WAS KANSUKE THE FEMALE BAMBOO-SPLITTER.
SHE HAD A TERRIBLE BURN SCAR ON HER FACE... WHY IS SHE...
DEAR!
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP


THUNK

AAAHHH!
OH, KASAJIRŌ!
DON'T DIE!
I DON'T WANT YOU TO DIE WITHOUT ME!
UHH KUH KUH...

AAAHHH!
AAAHHH!
I'LL DIE TOO!
AH HUK HUK HUKHHH!

AAAHHH!
AAACHH!
THAT'S ENOUGH ALREADY, KASAJIRO!
STOP THIS CRUEL GAME!

SNAP OUT OF IT!
YOU DIDN'T REALIZE THAT THIS SORT OF THING MIGHT HAPPEN IF YOU MARRIED A *JITTE* MAN, DID YOU?
YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN *PREPARED* FOR IT.
OH, KASAJIRŌ...
OH... MY *DEAR* KASAJIRŌ...
HAVE I *CHANGED*?

OHHH...
DON'T SCREW WITH ME, YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING SONUVABITCH!
I WAS ALREADY SHAKEN UP, AND THEN YOU DO THIS TO ME!
I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO FOLLOW YOU IN DEATH!

YOU CAN SAVE YOUR LIES AND TALL TALES FOR SOMEBODY *OTHER* THAN YOUR *WIFE*! AND I'M SICK OF YOUR HUSBAND ACT!
WHAT?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, A COP'S WIFE SHOULD BE *PREPARED*?! HOW WOULD *YOU* LIKE IT IF YOU *DIED* AND I *LAUGHED*?!
WHAT ARE *YOU* FROWNING AT *ME* FOR?!
WE'RE *HUSBAND* AND *WIFE*. WHY *SHOULDN'T* I *CRY* WHEN I THINK YOU'VE *DIED*!?

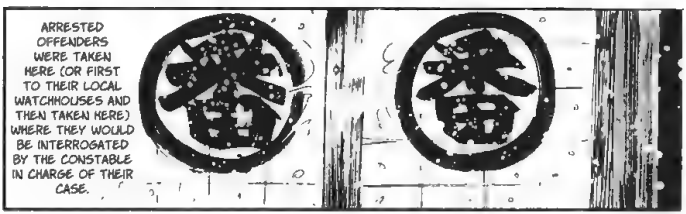
YOU BETTER APOLOGIZE, KASAJIRO!
YOU BITCH!
SAYING THAT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME!
STOP IT, YOU TWO.
THIS IS NO TIME FOR A MARRIED COUPLE TO QUARREL.
OHHH...
HMPH! AND I BOTHERED TO AVENGE YOU!
WHAT?!

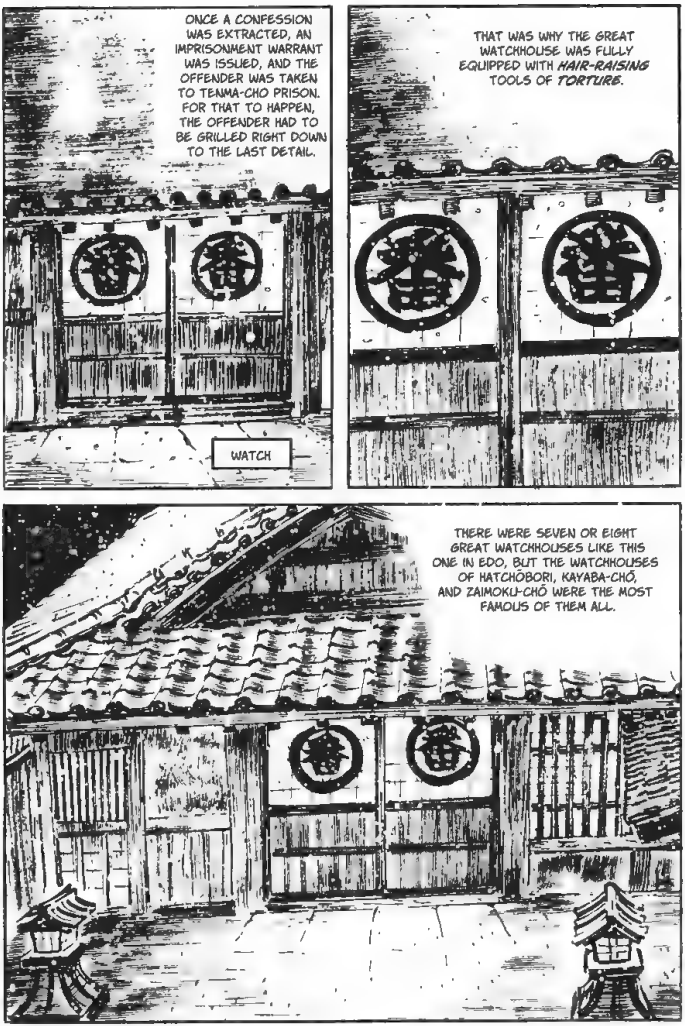
SHE'S A WOMAN WITH A BURN SCAR ON HER FACE. I GOT HER FOR YOU.
YOU W-WHAT?!
SK-SHINKO, Y-YOU...

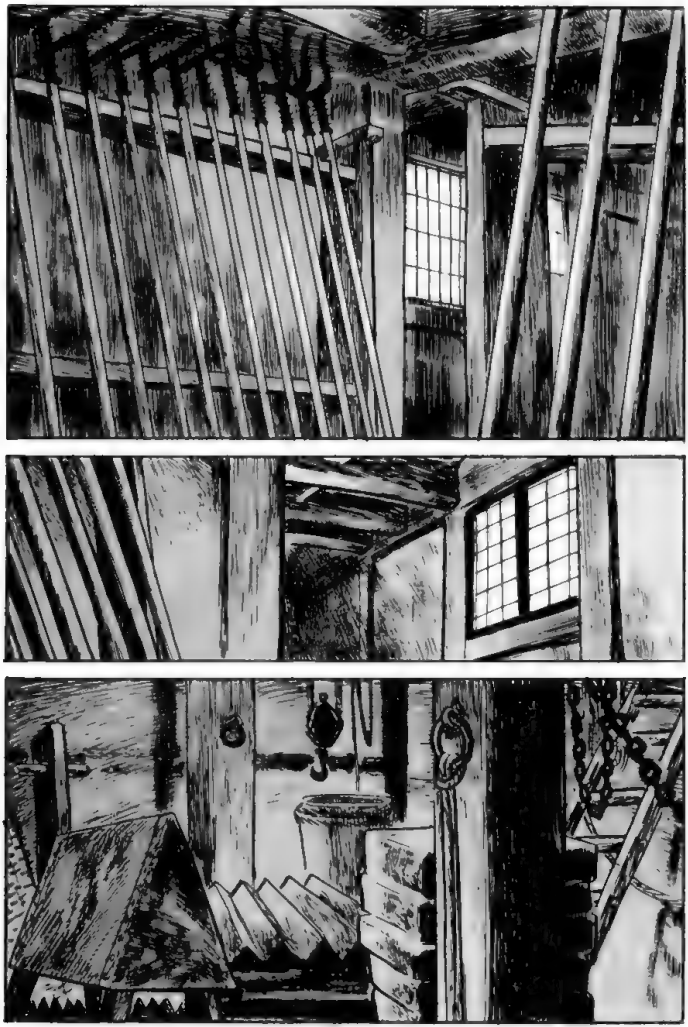
THAT NIGHT, THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF SAKANE KASAI'S WIFE SHINKO, THE VICIOUS WOMAN THIEF CALLING HERSELF KANSUKE THE BAMBOO-SPLITTER, THE TERROR OF ALL EDO, HAD BEEN ARRESTED.
御用
FALLING SNOW... MELTS INTO LIFE-GIVING WATER. HEH, HEH.

HATCHŌBORI
INVESTIGATION
WATCHHOUSE

THE INVESTIGATION WATCHHOUSE WAS ALSO CALLED THE GREAT WATCHHOUSE.


ARRESTED OFFENDERS WERE TAKEN HERE (OR FIRST TO THEIR LOCAL WATCHHOUSES AND THEN TAKEN HERE) WHERE THEY WOULD BE INTERROGATED BY THE CONSTABLE IN CHARGE OF THEIR CASE.


ONCE A CONFESSION WAS EXTRACTED, AN IMPRISONMENT WARRANT WAS ISSUED, AND THE OFFENDER WAS TAKEN TO TENMA-CHO PRISON. FOR THAT TO HAPPEN, THE OFFENDER HAD TO BE GRILLED RIGHT DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL.
WATCH
THAT WAS WHY THE GREAT WATCHHOUSE WAS FULLY EQUIPPED WITH HAIR-RAISING TOOLS OF TORTURE.
THERE WERE SEVEN OR EIGHT GREAT WATCHHOUSES LIKE THIS ONE IN EDO, BUT THE WATCHHOUSES OF HATCHŌBORI, KAYABA-CHŌ, AND ZAIMOKU-CHŌ WERE THE MOST FAMOUS OF THEM ALL.



THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF YOU, SAKANE KASAJIRŌ, IS IN *SERIOUS* CONDITION.
SO HE'S *STILL* ALIVE...
THUS *I'M* TAKING OVER YOUR CASE!
SNORRRT

SNIFFLE
SNIFFLE
SNNNORT
I'M A PATROLMAN LIKE SAKANE. I'M KONDO YOSHICHI. HEY CALL ME TOOTHLESS YOSHICHI.
YOU MUST HAVE HEARD OF ME. I'M AS RUTHLESS AS I AM TOOTHLESS.
YOU BETTER 'FESS UP EVERYTHING. I MIGHT NOT SPARE YOUR LIFE!
HMPH!
TAKE HER SOCKS OFF!

UNTIE HER HAIR.
I HAD SAKANE AND HIS WIFE SHINKO TELL ME A LOT ABOUT YOU.
ABOUT YOUR BAMBOO TECHNIQUE. ABOUT YOUR SKILL WITH A DAGGER. ABOUT HOW YOU CALL YOURSELF KANSUKE.

WHY?! WHY TAKE A MAN'S NAME?!
WHY?!
WHAT'S YOUR REAL NAME?!
HOW OLD ARE YOU?!

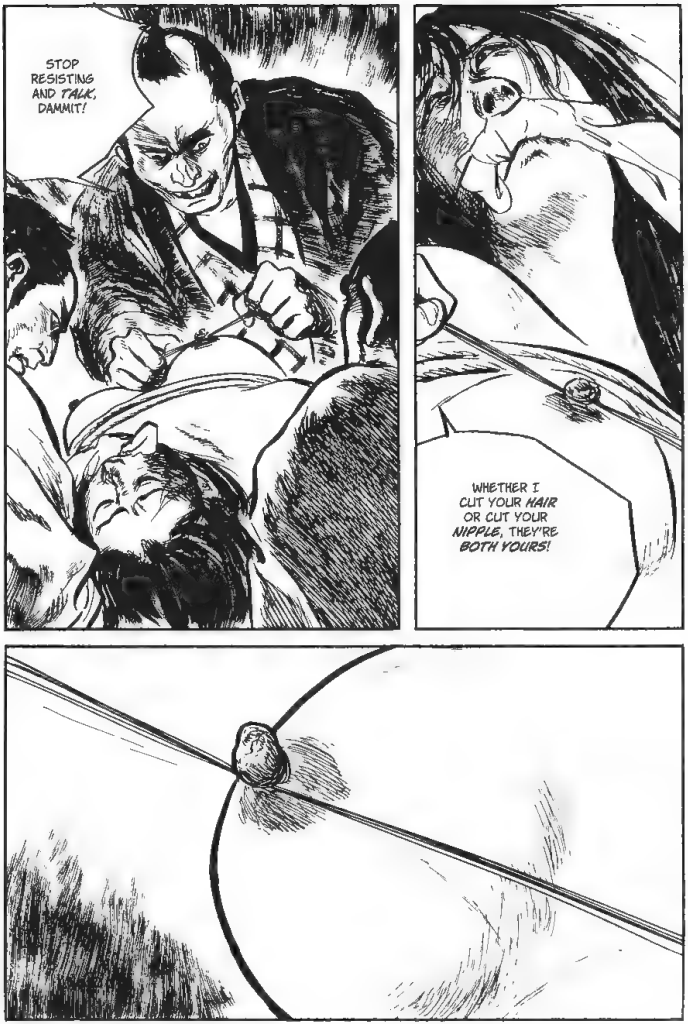
WELL...
PTTT!
OW!
WHY?! WHY WON'T YOU TALK?!
THIS NTERROGATION IS JUST A FORMALITY SO WE CAN GET YOUR IMPRISONMENT WARRANT.
YOUR SECRET'S ALREADY OUT. IT'S ALL OVER FOR YOU. THERE'S NO DOUBT YOU'LL BE TAKEN CARE OF AND SENT TO HELL!
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER YOU TALK OR NOT.

WHY DON'T YOU MAKE THINGS EASIER FOR *BOTH* OF US. YOUR TIME'S ALMOST UP!
OH, I SEE. I CAN *GUESS*.
YOU WANT TO DIE WITHOUT SAYING *ANYTHING* IF YOU CONFESSED, SOMETHING *INCONVENIENT* MIGHT HAPPEN!
TO YOUR *FRIENDS*, FOR INSTANCE. OR TO YOUR *MAN*.
SCWUSH
OW!
OWWW!
IT'S MY *JOB* TO MAKE YOU *TALK*!

BUT I SEE YOU HAVE NO FEAR IN YOUR EYES. YOU'RE REAL STUBBORN.
YOU GOT THE LOOK OF SOMEBODY WHO'D BITE HER TONGUE AND DIE.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, YOU COULD DIE BEFORE YOU EVEN GET TO VOMIT!
HEH, HEH.
OWWW!
BBBH

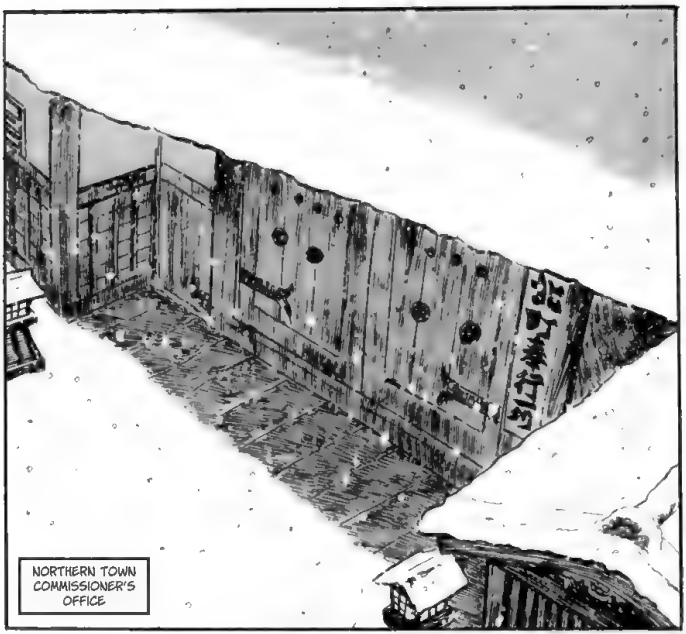
DIDJA EVER GIVE BIRTH...?
OGHHHH!
PWIP!
PWIP!
AHHH!
GGG!
OHHHH!

GGHH!
HEH, HEH.
HEH, HEH.
HMMGGHH!
THIS IS REAL SELF-TORTURE. I'M TYING YOUR NIPPLE WITH YOUR OWN HAIR!
HOW MANY PEOPLE DID YOU KILL?! THIS IS NOTHING COMPARED TO BEING STABBED!
I'M FIRST GONNA PINCH YOU SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THEIR PAIN!


STOP RESISTING AND *TALK*, DAMMIT!
WHETHER I CUT YOUR *HAIR* OR CUT YOUR *NIPPLE*, THEY'RE *BOTH YOURS!*

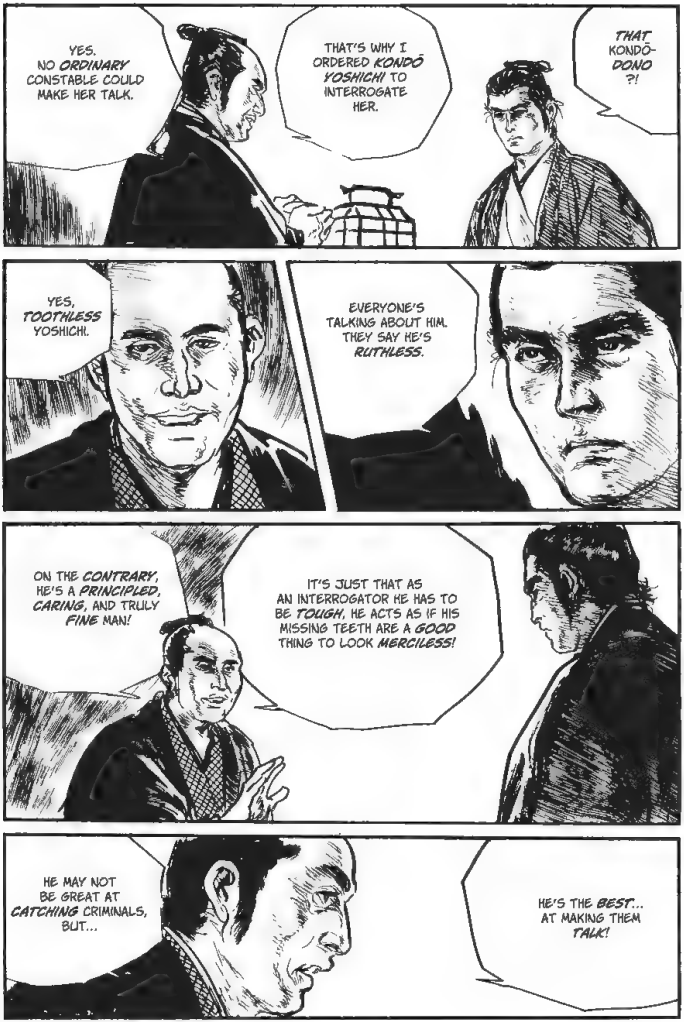
the thirty-third

Toothless Yoshichi


NORTHERN TOWN COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

KASAJIRŌ'S BECOME A *FINE JITTE* MAN.

THIS IS ALL THANKS TO YOU, YAMADA-SAMA.
NO, NO, SAKANE-SAMA DID IT ALL BY HIMSELF.
IN ANY CASE, IT'S GREAT THAT HE MANAGED TO SURVIVE.
EVEN I WAS SHOCKED WHEN HE BEGGED TO BE MARRIED TO SHINKO THE KAPPA.
I GAVE HIM PERMISSION, BUT I'VE BEEN IN A COLD SWEAT EVERY DAY WONDERING HOW THEIR MARRIAGE WOULD TURN OUT.
BUT THERE WAS A HAPPY ENDING TO ALL THAT STRUGGLING. NOW I CAN SLEEP SOUNDLY LIKE MY WIFE.
KANSUKE THE BAMBOO-SPLITTER'S BEEN CAUGHT, AND WHAT'S MORE..
SHE'S STUBBORN, ISN'T SHE?


YES. NO ORDINARY CONSTABLE COULD MAKE HER TALK.
THAT'S WHY I ORDERED KONDŌ YOSHICHI TO INTERROGATE HER.
THAT KONDŌ-DONO ?!
YES, TOOTHLESS YOSHICHI.
EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT HIM. THEY SAY HE'S RUTHLESS.
ON THE CONTRARY, HE'S A PRINCIPLED, CARING, AND TRULY FINE MAN!
IT'S JUST THAT AS AN INTERROGATOR HE HAS TO BE TOUGH, HE ACTS AS IF HIS MISSING TEETH ARE A GOOD THING TO LOOK MERCILESS!
HE MAY NOT BE GREAT AT CATCHING CRIMINALS, BUT...
HE'S THE BEST... AT MAKING THEM TALK!

PEOPLE THINK HE BLACKMAILS HIS VICTIMS TO TORTURE THEM, BUT THAT'S JUST FOR *SHOW*.
WHILE PERFORMING TORTURE ON THE *SURFACE*, AT SOME POINT HE MANAGES TO GET *INSIDE* THE HEART OF THE CRIMINAL, MAKING THEM TALK BEFORE THEY EVEN REALIZE IT.
HE'S *NEVER* FAILED TO CRACK ANYONE.
IT'S BECAUSE HE *KNOWS* HUMAN BEINGS SO WELL...BOTH THEIR STRENGTHS *AND* THEIR WEAKNESSES.
AND THAT IS *WHY* HE'S A *LONELY BACHELOR*...
A *LONELY* MAN...

IT'S BECAUSE HE CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH THE HUMAN HEART, DOWN TO ITS LOWEST DEPTHS. HE CAN'T DO SWEET TALK...
THAT'S WHAT HE TOLD ME AT SOME POINT.
HE CAN'T TELL A WOMAN HE'S FALLEN FOR HER. HE CAN'T HAVE ANYONE. IF SOME GIRL CAME ALONG, HE'D RUN AWAY.
THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON HE CAN'T EXAMINE. HIMSELF.
THAT'S THE KIND OF MAN HE IS.

HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE
HEE
MMM... OOOO...
OWWW
I'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN TO STRING YOU UP!
NOW I'LL GET SERIOUS! NOW!

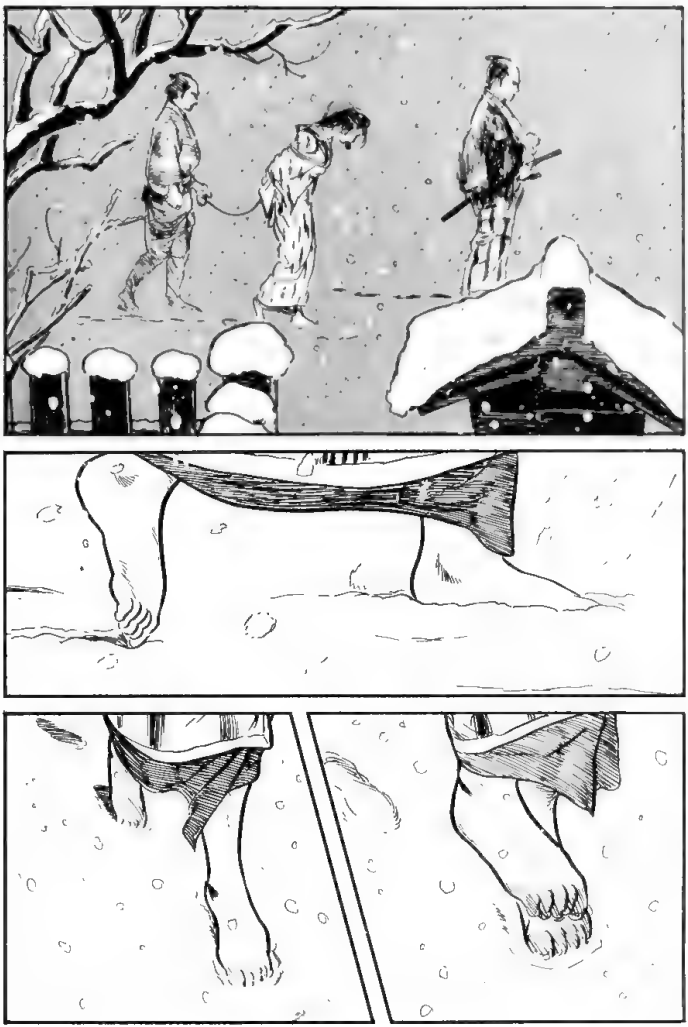
WHAT'S YOUR *REAL* NAME?!
IT'S GONNA GET *TIGHTER!*
TSK! IT CAME *OFF!*
DIDN'T WORK BECAUSE NIPPLES *EXPAND* AND *CONTRACT.*
WELL, LET'S TAKE A BREAK.

YOU'VE GOT SUCH NICE, SMOOTH FEET.
EVEN YOUR NAILS ARE WELL CUT.
PEOPLE NORMALLY DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH THEY DEPEND ON THEIR FEET TO STAND UP AND LIVE.
THEY DO EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO PLACE THEIR SOLES ON THE GROUND.

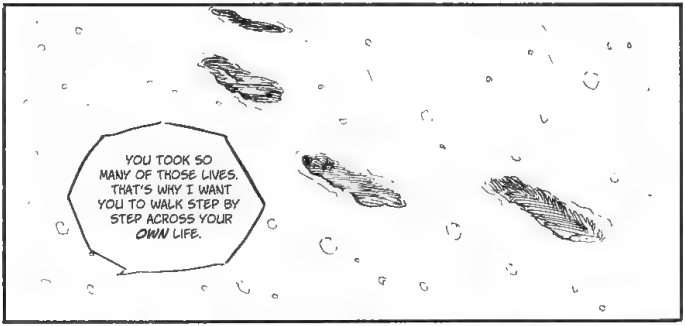
THAT'S WHY NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SOLE.
EVEN SO, THAT'S EASY TO FORGET.
THAT'S NOT JUST TRUE FOR PEOPLE; IT'S THE SAME WITH FOUR-LEGGED ANIMALS.
I'LL MAKE YOU THINK ABOUT JUST HOW IMPORTANT YOUR SOLES ARE.
GET UP!
HAS THE SNOW PILED UP?
YEAH, LOTS OF IT.

IT'S SNOWING *HARD*. THERE'LL BE *FIVE SUN* ON THE GROUND BY *MORNING*.

WE'RE GOING FOR A LITTLE WALK...
AROUND HATCHŌBORI... IN THE SNOW.



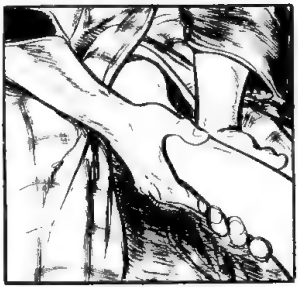
OOH...
GETTING COLD?!
I THINK THAT COLDNESS IS PENETRATING YOU RIGHT DOWN TO THE CORE.
IT'S BECAUSE THE SOLE IS OUR LINK TO LIFE ITSELF.


YOU TOOK SO MANY OF THOSE LIVES. THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU TO WALK STEP BY STEP ACROSS YOUR *OWN* LIFE.

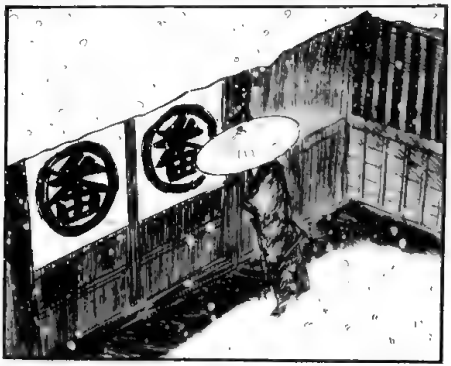
NOW YOU'LL UNDERSTAND HOW *IMPORTANT* YOUR LIFE IS!

OOH...

OOH...



AH...



IT'S YAMADA-SAMA!

IF IT'S TOO COLD, IT *HURTS*.
CONVERSELY, THE MORE SUSPECTS WALK, THE *LESS* PAIN THEY FEEL
IT SEEMS THAT THEIR SENSES GET *NUMB*.
THEY REACH THE VERGE OF LOSING *ALL* SENSATION.
KONDÔ-*SAMA* WARMS SUSPECTS' FEET WITH HIS *OWN* SKIN.
HE RESTORES BLOOD CIRCULATION IN THEIR SOLES AND THEY FEEL SO GOOD THAT THEY CAN'T PUT IT INTO WORDS.

THEN ONCE THEY CAN FEEL WITH THEIR FEET AGAIN, HE FORCES THEM TO WALK AGAIN.

IT FEELS JUST AS COLD AT FIRST, BUT...
KONDŌ-SAMA'S TORTURE CAN BE PHYSICALLY TOLERATED, SO IT'S NOT THAT BIG OF A DEAL.
OOH...

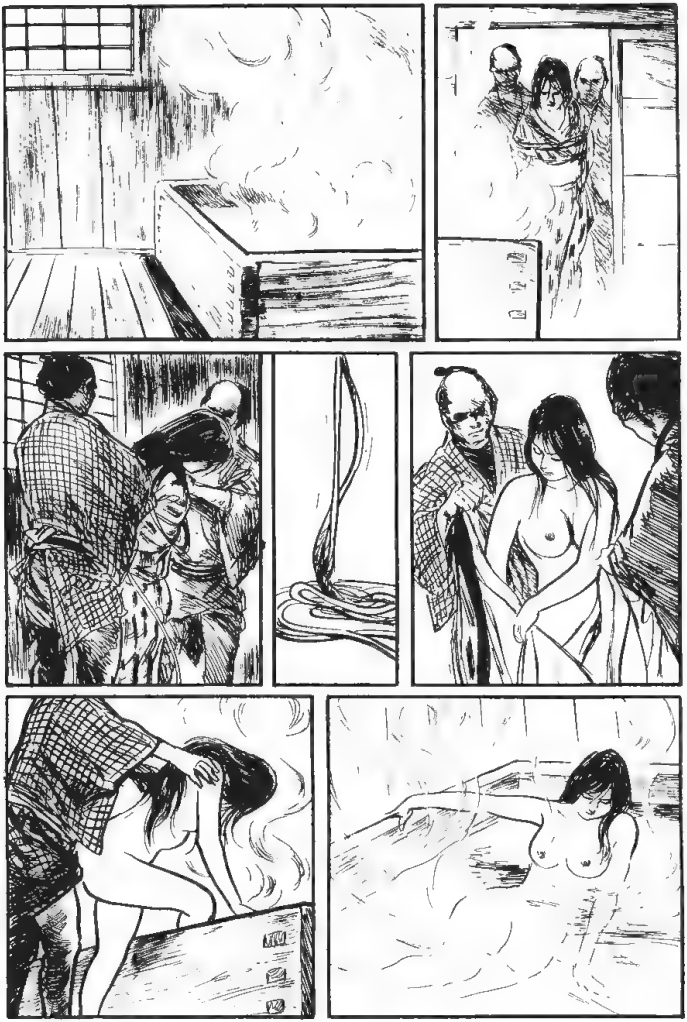
HOWEVER, IT'S GOING *BACK* AND *FORTH* BETWEEN *PLEASURE* AND *PAIN* THAT BECOMES INCREASINGLY *INTOLERABLE*.
TYING THEM UP, LOOSENING THEIR ROPES, THEN TYING THEM TIGHTER THAN BEFORE, *THEN* LOOSENING THEIR ROPES...
IT'S *REMARKABLE* THAT THEY CAN STILL BREATHE TIED UP LIKE THAT.
THE FEMALE KANSUKE'S GONNA *DROP* SHORTLY.
THAT KIND OF WOMAN CAN ENDURE *ANY* KIND OF TORTURE, BUT...
ONCE SHE'S FREED, WON'T SHE REVEAL HER *WEAKNESS*?
NO, I'M JUST REPORTING WHAT KONDŌ-*SAMA* TOLD ME...

HEY, WATCH THE "HOT DEGREE."
WHAT'S THE "HOT DEGREE"?
HE PUTS THEM INTO A HOT TUB...
AT THE VERY END.
OOH...
OOH...
D... D... A...
DAMN!

OWWW!

OOH...
OOH...

OOH...
OOH...
HOW'S THE "HOT DEGREE"?
IT'S JUST RIGHT.



IT'S GOOD TO DRINK WARM SAKE IN A HOT TUB
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
FU...
...SA.

WHERE WERE YOU BORN?
LITTLE HYÜGA.
I'M FUSA... THE DAUGHTER OF JINBEE THE POLISHER...
A POLISHER'S DAUGHTER, HUH?!
DID YOU SAY JINBEE... HMMM!
I'M SURE THAT FIVE OR SIX YEARS AGO HE GOT BURNED IN A FIRE, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT.
SO YOU'RE *THAT* JINBEE'S DAUGHTER?!
ANY OTHER RELATIVES?
DAD LOST *EVERYTHING* IN THAT FIRE. HE GOT *DEPRESSED* AND *SICK*

DID HE PASS AWAY?
YES! THEN MY MOTHER JOINED HIM, AS IF SHE WERE FOLLOWING HIM...
IS YOUR SCAR FROM THAT FIRE?
NO.
WHY NOT? YOU CAN TELL ME.
C'MON!

SPIT OUT EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN *FESTERING* INSIDE YOU.
C'MON!
I BURNT *MYSELF*.

EEEEEEEK!

A WOMAN'S FACE IS *EVERYTHING* TO HER! WHY WOULD YOU *DO* SUCH A THING?!
AFTER MY MOTHER DIED, I WAS *ALL ALONE*. I WAS SENT OFF TO A DISTANT RELATIVE, A BAMBOO CRAFTSMAN.

ALTHOUGH MY UNCLE WAS A GOOD MAN...
HIS SECOND WIFE WAS AN EX-PROSTITUTE.

ZAA
WHAT WAS HIS SON'S NAME?
KAN-SUKE...
AH, SO HE WAS THE CAUSE OF ALL OF THIS!
AN EX-PROSITUTE AND A KIND SON... I MORE OR LESS GUESSED CORRECTLY.
ON A NIGHT WHEN MY UNCLE WENT OUT TO HIS TANOMOSHIKŌ...

OOH...
OOH
OOH

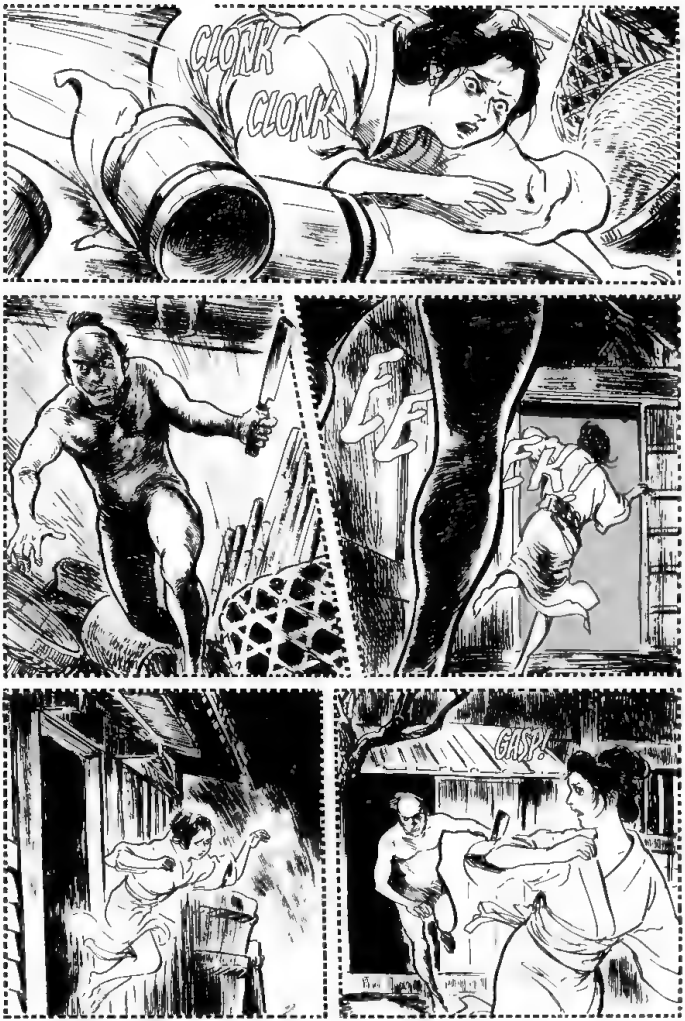
OOH
OOH
AAH!
AAH!

AAAOO-OHHH!
AAH!
KERTHUNK
THUMP THUMP THUMP

YOU SCUM!
BANG!
SO YOU WERE FUCKING AROUND WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING AFTER ALL!
CRASH!
D-DAD!
D-DEAR!
I WON'T FORGIVE YOU! YOU SCUM!
WHOOMP!
ASSHOLE!
YOU FUCKERS!
WHOOMP!

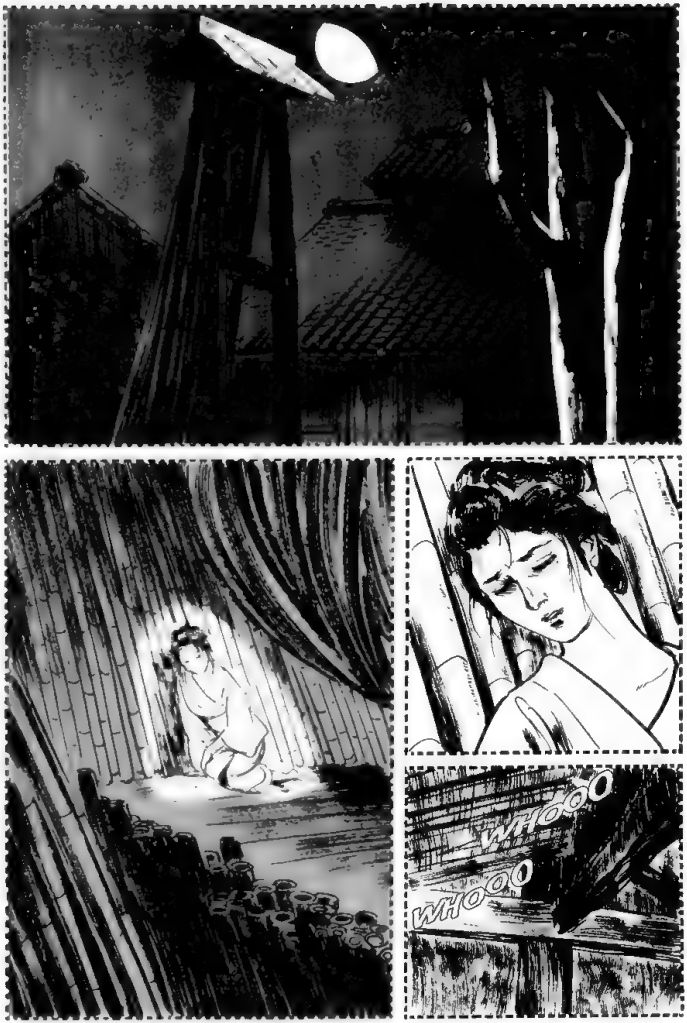
WHOMP!
EEEK!

AAAH!
W-WAIT!
GASP...


CLONK
CLONK
GASP!

CREAK
SLAM
I'M NOT GONNA TAKE CARE OF YOU IF YOU'RE GONNA BE A CAGED BIRD!
WHAP
CLUNK
KCHING

HUFF HUFF
FUSA...
IT HAD TO HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER...
NOTHING'LL HAPPEN TO YOU IF YOU DON'T TALK.
DAD WENT UP TO THE MOUNTAINS TO GO SIGHTSEEING. CAN'T THE THREE OF US GET ALONG AND LIVE TOGETHER?
WH...
YOU HAVE NOWHERE TO GO.
EVEN IF YOU DID TELL SOMEBODY, IT WOULDN'T BE WORTH ANYTHING.
YOU'D JUST END UP DEAD IN A DITCH SOMEWHERE. THINK ABOUT THAT.

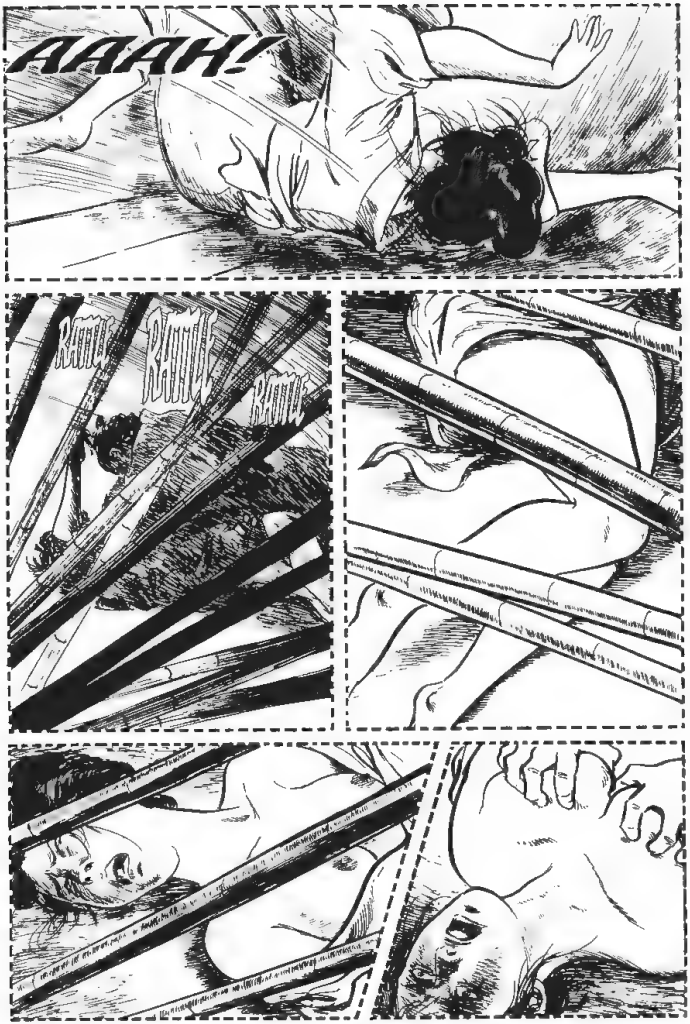

WHOOO
WHOOO

WHOOO
WHOOO
GSHH
GSHH
GASP
I WAS TOO TERRIFIED TO GO OUT...
KANSUKE WAS OUT THERE, SAYING THE SAME THINGS OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

I DIDN'T OPEN THE DOOR OF THE LITTLE HUT.
I WAS SCARED... COLD...IF I WAS GOING TO BE KILLED... I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE DIED RIGHT THERE.
IT WAS ON THE THIRD NIGHT... OR WAS IT THE FOURTH?
I WAS TIRED...
...OF BEING HUNGRY, COLD, AND SCARED...

BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
A FIRE!
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
FIRE!

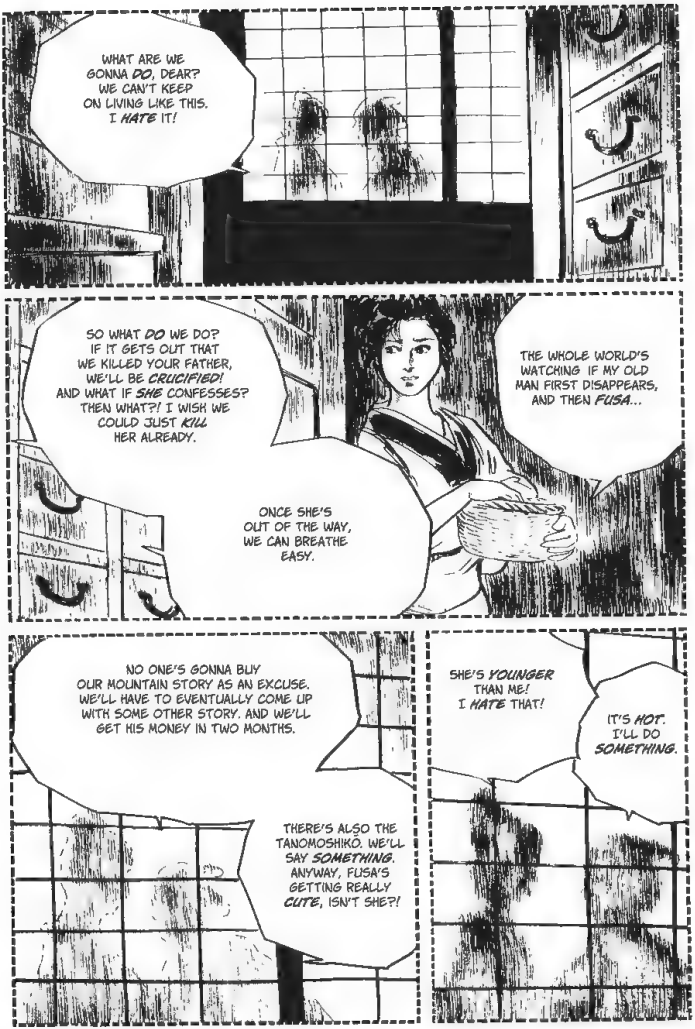
...
EEEK!
HEH, HEH, YOU REALLY THOUGHT THERE WAS A FIRE?!
HEH, HEH...
GASP!
HEH, HEH!


AAAH!
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE

EEK!

WHILE HE VIOLATED ME, HE SPOKE SO SMOOTHLY...

WHEN YOU SPLIT THE BAMBOO... IT MADE THE SOUND OF A FIRE ABOUT TO BURST OUT I THOUGHT IT WAS REALLY GOING TO GET ME...
ONLY THOSE WORDS... STUCK IN MY HEART....
I FORGET THEM, BUT I COULDN'T....
FROM THEN ON... WE LED A DEPRAVED LIFE...
...AS ONE MAN AND TWO WOMEN...
EVEN THOUGH I REMEMBER IT ALL... I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT ANY OF IT....
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME THAT PART. IT HURTS ME TO ASK YOU.
BUT WHY DID YOU BURN YOUR FACE?


WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO, DEAR? WE CAN'T KEEP ON LIVING LIKE THIS. I HATE IT!
SO WHAT DO WE DO? IF IT GETS OUT THAT WE KILLED YOUR FATHER, WE'LL BE CRUCIFIED! AND WHAT IF SHE CONFESSES? THEN WHAT?! I WISH WE COULD JUST KILL HER ALREADY.
THE WHOLE WORLD'S WATCHING IF MY OLD MAN FIRST DISAPPEARS, AND THEN FUSA...
ONCE SHE'S OUT OF THE WAY, WE CAN BREATHE EASY.
NO ONE'S GONNA BUY OUR MOUNTAIN STORY AS AN EXCUSE. WE'LL HAVE TO EVENTUALLY COME UP WITH SOME OTHER STORY. AND WE'LL GET HIS MONEY IN TWO MONTHS.
THERE'S ALSO THE TANOMOSHIKO. WE'LL SAY SOMETHING. ANYWAY, FUSA'S GETTING REALLY CUTE, ISN'T SHE?!
SHE'S YOUNGER THAN ME! I HATE THAT!
IT'S HOT. I'LL DO SOMETHING.

YEAH, I HAVE A GOOD IDEA LET'S SELL HER AS A PROSTITUTE TO HELL HOUSE WE COULD GET TEN PIECES OF GOLD!
WITH THAT KIND OF MONEY, WE COULD MOVE TO KYOTO!
HMPH. JUST TEN PIECES?
I KNOW SOMEBODY WHO CAN QUICKLY CONTACT A BUYER. WE CAN TRUST HELL HOUSE.
SHE CAN SCREAM ALL SHE WANTS, BUT NOBODY'LL LISTEN. THERE'S NO WAY SHE'LL EVER ESCAPE.
SO LET'S DO THAT!

"THAT'S WHY I BURNT MY FACE. IT WAS SO THAT NOBODY COULD SELL ME...
"WHO'D BUY ME IF I HAD A BURNED FACE LIKE A MONSTER?
"IF THAT HATEFUL COUPLE DIDN'T HAVE THEIR MONEY, THEY'D BE STUCK IN THEIR HOUSE.
"AND THEY WOULDN'T GET THEIR TEN PIECES OF GOLD EITHER.
AND AT THAT TIME I WAS IN HIDING... BECAUSE I HAD MISSED MY PERIOD...

SSSSSS
AAAH!
AAAH!
FUSA!
AAAH!

FUSA!
YOU BITCH! WHAT'D YOU DO?!
HEE, HEE!
YOU CAN'T SELL ME NOW-- NOT WITH A FACE LIKE THIS!
NOW YOU'LL NEVER GET YOUR TEN PIECES OF GOLD! TOO BAD!
AAAH!

HEE, HEE.
HEH, HEH.
A-AND SO YOU...
D-DAMMIT! ARE YOU GONNA LET THIS LITTLE TRAMP SCREW WITH YOU?!
NOW THAT WE CAN'T SELL YOU, YOU'RE JUST A *BURDEN* TO US!
C'MON, DEAR, *KILL* HER!
SHE BURNT *HER OWN FACE*. WHO KNOWS *WHAT* SHE'S CAPABLE OF?!

DO IT NOW, SO WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY LATER!
D-DON'T KILL ME!
EEK! DON'T KILL ME!
I'LL DO ANYTHING! JUST DON'T KILL ME!
I...I'M PREGNANT... WITH YOUR BABY!
I-IT'S TRUE!
LIAR!
YOU HAVE TO BE LYING!

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?! HURRY UP AND KILL HER!
DEAR!
C'MON, DEAR, HURRY!
SHADDUP!
SLAP!
I DO WHATEVER I WANT. I'M NOT GONNA OBEY YOU.
GET OUTTA HERE!

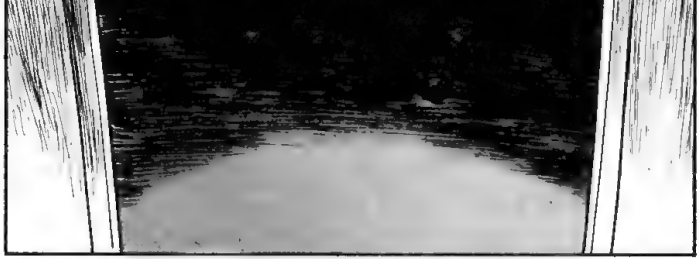
STOMP!
STOMP!
STOMP!
AAAH!

STOMP!
AAAH!
STOMP!
BITCH! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
AAAH!
OWWW...
FUSA!
I-IS SHE MORE IMPORTANT THAN M-ME?!
MAYBE, BUT IT'S TOO LATE! IT'S ALL OVER! SHE'S LOST YOUR BABY!
SEE?! LOOK!
Y-YOU BITCH!
URGHHH...

Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
Ho
SO WHAT DID YOU DO NEXT?
THAT WAS THE END OF THEM. THE THREE OF THEM ALL ENDED UP TOGETHER...

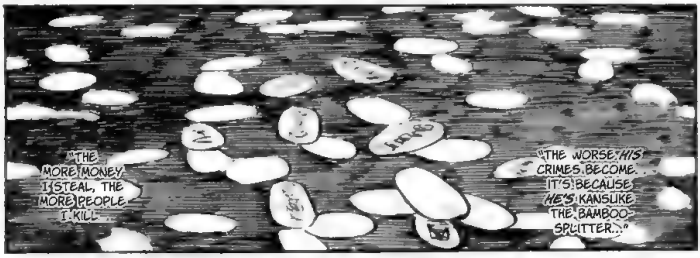
BUT I *HAD* TO MAKE A LIVING.
I HAD LOST MY CHILD. AND SINCE I WASN'T GOING TO EARN THEM ANY MONEY, THEY WERE GOING TO *KILL* ME.
AND *I* HAD TO EARN MONEY. THOSE TWO HAD NOWHERE TO GO, NOWHERE TO RUN...
BUT IT WAS *HE* WHO HAD THOUGHT OF SPLITTING BAMBOO TO FOOL PEOPLE.
USING *HIS* TECHNIQUE, I KILLED PEOPLE AND STOLE THEIR MONEY.
HE MUST BE SPENDING EVERY DAY IN *TERROR*...TREMBLING AS IF *HE* HAD KILLED THOSE PEOPLE *HIMSELF*. HEH, HEH.
THE MORE *I* STEAL, THE WORSE *HIS* CRIMES BECOME...
HEH, HEH. IT'S BECAUSE *HE'S* KANSUKE THE BAMBOO-SPLITTER... HO HO HO...

WE RAN OUT TO ARREST KANSUKE AND THE WIFE.
御用
WHAM!



UGHHH...

"I HAD TO EARN MONEY...
"THOSE TWO HAD NOWHERE TO GO, NOWHERE TO RUN.


"THE MORE MONEY I STEAL, THE MORE PEOPLE I KILL.
"THE WORSE HIS CRIMES BECOME... IT'S BECAUSE HE'S KANSUKE THE BAMBOO-SPLITTER..."

IT WAS A HEART-WRENCHING SIGHT.

KANBEE THE BAMBOO CRAFTSMAN'S BODY TURNED UP. IT WASN'T SO MUCH A CORPSE AS IT WAS JUST A BUNCH OF BONES...

THE NEIGHBORS AND TANOMOSHIKŌ MEMBERS SAID THAT KANBEE HAD FALLEN ILL WHILE JOURNEYING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS AND THAT HIS WIFE AND KANSUKE HAD GONE OFF TO TAKE CARE OF HIM...
SO NOW...
SHE'S GONE MAD.
I DON'T EXECUTE PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR MINDS.
HEH HEH HEH
HO HO HO HO
HEH HEH
PUFF!
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF

BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
BSCHHH
WHOOSH!

GLOSSARY

agarizashiki
Cell for prisoners of the highest ranks.

Enshū
Old name for the western part of the modern prefecture of Shizuoka.

han
A feudal domain.

honorifics
Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes o and go, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Samurai Executioner*:

chan – for children, young women, and close friends
dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals
sama – used for superiors
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians.

hour of the horse
Between 11 A.M. and 1 P.M.

jikisan
A samurai directly under the shogun.

kadomatsu
New Year's decoration made of pine and bamboo.

Kappa
A water sprite.

mikoshi
A miniature shrine carried during festivals.

okappiki
Unofficial policemen who were usually former criminals.

rōjū
Inner circle of councilors directly advising the shōgun.

rōnin
A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of han, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished rōnin became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

Tenma
Tenma prison.

sun
Approximately three centimeters.

tanomoshikō
Mutual financing association.

"wasshoi"
Shouted when carrying a mikoshi (portable shrine) during a festival.

white wave
Elegant term for a thief.

Note: Kansuke the bamboo splitter uses a few lines almost directly from the kabuki play Benten Kōzo.

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing such classic manga as *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman*, Koike has hosted the popular *Shibi Golf Weekly* instructional television program; founded the *Albatross View* golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists—such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi—break into the comics field. His methods and teachings continue to influence new generations of manga creators, not to mention artists and writers around the world. Examples of Koike's influence range from the comics works of Frank Miller and Stan Sakai to the films of Quentin Tarantino.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to the character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well-created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

Kazuo Koike continues to work in the entertainment media to this very day, consistently diversifying his work and forging new paths across the rough roads of Edo-period history and the green swaths of today's golfing world.

GOSEKI KOJIMA

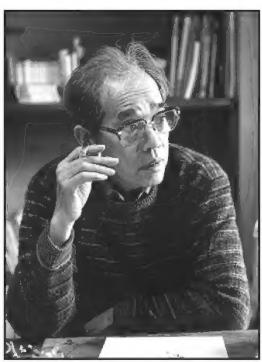
Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. Art was a Kojima family tradition, his own father an amateur portrait artist and his great-great-grandfather a sculptor.

In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines just starting to reach the newsstands. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or "paper-play" narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays, and later moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers.

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his ninja adventure, *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular samurai manga series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami (Lone Wolf and Cub)*. Many additional series would follow, including this related series, *Samurai Executioner.*

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, the great Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of seventy-one.



Crime is certainly nothing new to Yamada Asaemon. As the shogun's decapitator, punishing those accused of the most heinous crimes is just his job, which is why he's always lived with the nickname "head-chopper."

In each volume of *Samurai Executioner*, the heads fly frequently, but before they fly, they must be caught. And sometimes the crimes are particularly clever and require some quick-witted constables. One of the best is the young "Catcher" Kasajiro. But this time he's got his hands full with a vicious killer and a vexing mystery in "The Bamboo Splitter."

Published for the first time in America in the Japanese format.

Punished is not the man himself, but the evil that resides in him.

DARK HORSE MANGA

首斬り朝

FOR READERS 18+
FOR MATURE READERS